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The Inspiration

and

Authority of the Bible.

BY

DR. CLIFFORD.

THIRD EDITION.





THE INSPIRATION
AND
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

BY

JOHN CLIFFORD

M.A., LL.B., B.Sc. (LOND. UNIV.), F.G.S., D.D. (HON.)

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TO

EBENEZER CAYFORD, Esq., J.P.,

AS A SOUVENIR OF A CLOSE AND UNBROKEN FRIENDSHIP

DEEPLY CHERISHED AND ENJOYED

FOR MORE THAN FORTY YEARS;

AND IN RECOGNITION OF CORDIAL FELLOWSHIP;

IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS

AT PRAED STREET AND WESTBOURNE PARK

NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

AND ALWAYS THOUGHT OF WITH THANKFULNESS TO GOD,

I INSCRIBE THIS BOOK.



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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE First Edition of this book sold very rapidly, and enquiries have been repeatedly made for a second issue. That issue has been delayed so that I might give consideration to the criticisms passed upon some of the statements I have made.

One reviewer suggested that I should shew "the constant Divine element in the Bible, the permanent Truth underneath all changing forms." At the risk of repetition I have, in response to that counsel, added the chapter on "Why the Bible Lives." But the greater part of the controversy excited by the book bore upon the problem of "the Inerrancy of the Bible." This accounts for the addition of chapters four and five.

In reply to hints from those who have used the book in College Class work, I have expounded and confirmed some statements, sometimes in the text, and at others, in appended notes.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION,

I HAVE printed these papers on *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (some of which have appeared before) in the hope that they may be of use to some of those who shrink from heartily accepting the "treasures" of Divine Revelation, because of the "earthen" character of the "vessel" in which they are offered; or are giving only a hesitating obedience to the commands of God because they have become confused and perplexed as to the authority of the Bible over the spiritual life. I have written to inspire faith in God and His Gospel, to prevent men from sailing towards "the sunless gulf of Doubt"; and as far as I can to guide them towards Him Who is at once the true Centre, the Perfect Ideal, and full Rest of the whole man, of intellect not less than heart, and of will as well as conscience.

Two of these articles were written especially for Young Men, and appeared first in the *Young Man* and subsequently in different volumes, one entitled *How to Study the Bible*, and the other *Biblical Difficulties*. Nor are the thoughts, perplexities and needs of young men and maidens out of sight throughout the rest of the contents of this volume. To such, some of them have, I rejoice to say, been already of service, and I trust that in this fresh form they will continue and increase their beneficial work.

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THE INSPIRATION
AND
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

I.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE.

ALTHOUGH nothing is more obvious, yet nothing is more frequently forgotten than the fact that the Bible *demands*, as well as deserves and rewards, intelligent and strenuous study. Its main teachings are so luminous, and its language is so familiar through long use, that we forget that every page offers precious materials to earnest search, and golden grains to those who will patiently and wisely toil. Ruskin is not a whit too severe when he says in his "Ethics of the Dust": "The way the common people read their Bibles is just like the way the old monks thought hedgehogs ate grapes. They rolled themselves (it was said) over and over where the grapes lay on the ground. What first stuck to their spines they carried off and ate. So your hedgehoggy readers roll themselves over and over their Bibles, and declare whatever sticks to their spines is Scripture, and that nothing else is." "But," he adds, "you can only get the skins of the texts that way; if you

want their juice you must press them in cluster." We must "*strive* to enter in by the narrow door" of the Kingdom of Revelation, for many think to dream their way therein, and are not able. The Bible will not give its best treasures to indolence, or even to transparent sincerity and intense devotion, indispensable as they are. Study is requisite—clear-sighted, methodical, scientific study—if we are resolved to know what is and what is not the *real Word* God has spoken to men. There is no "royal road" to the knowledge of the Word. We must "search the Scriptures" if we are bent on using its opulent ideas and Divine Inspiration in building up a manly life. Knowledge gained from the great Christian tradition, the current talk of the Churches, and from the press, has its service, but it must never be permitted to take the place of the sifted, methodised, and personally tested acquisitions each man should make for himself by diligent and painstaking study. The goodly pearls are to be had if we are willing to pay for them.

(2) The *first* thing needful to the man resolved to study the Bible aright is to obtain, by the best means at his disposal, the *strict, exact, and full meaning* of the words employed by the sacred writer, free from all personal colouring and theological bias, and stated with scrupulous fidelity to grammar and lexicon, to custom and history, to the ascertained mood and purpose of the writer, and to the intellectual and ethical conditions of the recipients of his message. This is fundamental. Reverence for the wonderful Book ought to create a hallowed dread of adding to

or taking away from the Spirit-filled contents of the words of Scripture; and yet it is notorious that no book has suffered more from the uncritical and irrational treatment it has received from its readers and admirers. Prof. Cheyne writes: "The better a reader understands the historical sense the more likely he is to find out the best spiritual sense." It is the Biblical *idea* that is fruitful and reproductive. In it is life. No pains therefore may be spared to make sure that we have it. We owe at once to the Book and to ourselves all that is necessary to get, at any cost, the exact meaning of the Word of God.*

(3) Therefore, speaking broadly but still accurately, we must study the contents of the Bible in the same way as we do those of any book, say Milton's "Paradise Lost," or Tyndall on "Heat," or Green's "History of the English People," that is, with

- (a) The same resolute detachment of mind;
- (b) The same readiness to defer to rightful authority;
- (c) The same use of the best tools which can be had;
- (d) The same strong sympathy with the subject on which the writers treat, the spirit they breathe, and the purpose they seek to realise.

"Men spake, or wrote the 'Scriptures,' as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; but they were *men*,

* "Calvin is the founder of modern grammatico-historical exegesis. He affirmed and carried out the sound and fundamental hermeneutical principle that the Bible authors, like all sensible writers, wished to convey to their readers one definite thought in words which they could understand."—Schaff, *History of the Church*, XII., 532. This accounts for Calvin being regarded by some men as the father of the Higher Criticism.

and their words can only be accurately explained and fully understood as the ordinary, literary, textual and critical methods of study are faithfully applied. For us the Revelation of God is in an English "earthen vessel," and we must obtain the contents of the vessel by the same processes that yield us success with Milton's Poems, Tyndall's Science, and Green's story of our Ancestors.

(4) I do not know anything more difficult or more urgent in Biblical study than perfect "detachment of mind," a going directly to the Book itself, and listening with purged ear and absolutely unprejudiced spirit to its message. I have found that ninety per cent. of the difficulties of young men with regard to the Bible are not due to the Bible at all, but to the theories of men about its composition or inspiration, its theology or interpretation. As the true and progressive artist goes straight to a landscape and sees Nature for himself ; as the scientist investigates the facts, and materials, and processes of Nature at first hand ; so it is the direct face-to-face vision of the Book that is revealing. Suffer the Scriptures to tell their own tale to the spirit sincerely in quest of the truth concerning God and the soul, and you will not be long before you feel and confess their Divine Inspiration.

(5) Going thus with cleansed vision to the Book itself, we must next welcome every competent guide in fixing and expressing the sense of its contents. The *Revised Version* of our English Bible should be preferred and its marginal readings consulted, for

they often contain better renderings of the original text, and disclose the writer's idea in its greater fulness and beauty. But we must not suffer marginal references and concordance lists to hide the differences of meaning through which a word has passed in its long history, or in which it has been used by various authors. Important as the letter is, the unity of the Bible is not of the letter, but of the spirit.

I ought to add that the volumes of the "Cambridge Bible for Colleges and Schools" form at once, one of the cheapest and one of the most competent, guides in this study. In seeking exegetical help it will be wise to select authors who have made special books of the Bible, or distinct portions of Biblical history, their chief study, as Dr. Lightfoot on the *Galatians*, *Philippians*, and *Colossians*; Dr. Morison on *Matthew*; Dr. Westcott on the writings of John; Dr. Cheyne on *Job* and *Solomon, Psalms* and *Isaiah*; Dr. Davidson on *Job* and *Ezekiel*; Dr. Cox and Dr. Plumptre on *Ecclesiastes*. Great aid will be found in books treating of special Biblical themes, e.g., Bruce's *Kingdom of God*; Wendt's *Teaching of Jesus*; Beyschlag's *Theology of the New Testament*; Miss Julia Wedgwood's *Message of Israel*; Schultz's *Old Testament Theology*.

(6) My experience and observation warrant the assertion that special advantage will be found in taking a gospel such as Mark's, or an epistle such as that of James, or a section of an epistle such as that on practical life and service, beginning with the 12th chapter of the Romans, or a limited period of Hebrew

history like the Exile, and concentrating attention upon it, until its text is understood, its leading ideas grasped, and its spirit possessed. A little of the Bible well understood and thoroughly mastered will go further and help more than a cursory knowledge of larger portions of it. It adds to the interest of the pursuit, and confers such a command as enables the reader afterwards to engage in the study of other portions with increased success. For the Bible is a library, a collection of the masterpieces of the literature of a people, packed into the smallest compass, but belonging to widely separated periods, and comprising nearly all forms of literature, and therefore is best examined in restricted but related portions, aided by the "introductions" written by competent men.* In this way we shall see the progress of Revelation from the elementary and imperfect conceptions of God and of morality in the Old Testament to the full and perfect teaching of Christ Jesus in the Gospels.

(7) Let me add to these brief hints, the eternal law that a definite spiritual aim, and a strong sympathy with spiritual ideals, are supremely necessary for the successful study of the Word of God. We must go to the Bible to learn how to live the best life; to see God in Christ reconciling us to Himself; to enjoy

* Such as Dr. Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*; Prof. Salmon's *Introduction to the New Testament*; *Introduction to the New Testament*, by Dr. F. Godet. Much cheaper works will be found in the "Guild and Bible Class Text Books," published by A. & C. Black, e.g., Prof. Robertson on *The Old Testament and its Contents*; Rev. J. A. McClymont, *The New Testament and its Writers*.

Him and to serve Him, in serving Man, His child ; and therefore we must read humbly and devoutly as well as reflectively. Spenser's Una asked Fidelia or Faith to take the Red Cross Knight to the school-house "that of her heavenly learning he might taste, and hear the wisdom of her words Divine," and

" She unto him disclosed every whitt,
And Heavenly documents thereout did preach
That weaker wit of man could never reach :
Of God ; of Grace ; of Justice ; of Free Will ;
That wonder was to hear her goodly speech,
For she was able with her words to kill,

And raise again to life the heart that she did thrill."*

Our prayer, offered in faith, must be : " Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Our solace is the promise of our Lord : " If ye shall ask Me anything in My name I will do it ; and I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth ;" and " when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth."

NOTE A.

The Study of Words.—Whilst we are careful to maintain that the Bible must be judged as a whole and that—

" We must assert the privilege of the soul
In that it knows to understand the whole,"

yet no student of Revelation may forget the caution of Trench in his book on the *Synonyms of the New Testament* : " The words of the New Testament are eminently the 'elements' or first principles of Christian Theology, and he who will not begin with a patient study of those shall never make any considerable, least of all any secure, advances in this : for here, as everywhere else, sure disappointment awaits him who thinks to possess the whole without first possessing the parts of which that whole is composed."

* Faery Queene, Book I., Canto X., Sts. 18, 19.

Speaking of Arabia, J. Theodore Bent says: "It must be done piecemeal and then patched together as it were: for the traveller on a great through-journey generally loses the most interesting details." So it is with the Scriptures, we must master the details and then view them in relation to the whole.

NOTE B.

Detachment of Mind, to be qualified by Sympathy with Spiritual Ideals in the Study of the Bible.—"The demand that the interpreter of Scripture shall frankly place himself in a purely objective position towards the Bible, and allow it to speak for itself, sounds most ingenuous, and is in itself, *in thesi*, quite unimpeachable; but *in praxi* it leads to the very opposite of what it demands, because the interpreter, thanks to exegetical tradition, brings with him to his task certain definite and partially incorrect preconceptions as to the proper meaning of the Bible, whose authority this principle actually tends to perpetuate."—Rothe, *Still Hours*, p. 221.

NOTE C.

The Reader's Gains from Sympathy with Spiritual Ideals.—Prof. Rendel Harris, M.A., says: "True spiritual life will widen the soul in its perceptions—extend our powers of knowing. With all our books of theology and treatises on spiritual life, we are almost obliged to say that 'all is less than nothing and vanity.' But we believe that for those whom God enlarges, there is an unspeakable increase in the perceptive powers of the soul: they are taught things that no one else knows anything about, and that are hidden from the wise and prudent. There is knowledge for the simple and lowly ones; for those who, in the spiritual strength they have derived from God, run in the way of His commandments. Looking into the Father's face and into the Saviour's heart, the soul can say, 'This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.'"—*Memoranda Sacra*, 47, 49, 50.

Keble, in his poem on "Balaam," describes the blinding effect of evil on the intellect:—

"No sun or star so bright

In all the world of light

That they should draw to heaven his downward eye:

He hears th' Almighty's word,

He sees the angel's sword,

Yet low upon the earth his heart and treasure lie."

II.

DIFFICULTIES AS TO INSPIRATION, AND THE FOUR WAYS IN WHICH MEN MEET THEM.

JOHN BUNYAN'S *Little Faith* was "a good man, and dwelt in the town of *Sincere*." He did not come from the metropolis of Godlessness, or the city of Wilfulness and Lust, but from the abode of high aims and true purpose. There may be men who corrupt themselves by affecting doubts and feigning difficulties. It is not impossible. But I have not, so far as I know, met them. It is, however, certain that many men, resolved to hold aloof from credulity and to resist being conquered by unbelief, are confronted by Biblical difficulties that create a real crisis in their faith, and are weighted with problems they are unable either to solve or to dismiss. Their doubt is not simulated, nor are their perplexities unreal. They are not imitators or echoes. They are "good men, and dwell in the town of *Sincere*."

I wish to handle the difficulties which are created for earnest seekers after God by the fact and doctrine of the Inspiration of the Bible. It is impossible to cover the whole ground they occupy, or to go into

many details. I therefore prefer to give, at the outset, four samples of the ways in which men have, in spite of the painful pressure of such difficulties, maintained an erect gait, and marched with steadfast foot and unimpaired intellectual conscience along the Christian course, or have found such answers to their questions as have brought them not only coveted relief but intellectual satisfaction and nourishment.

I. Some minds have entered into strength and freedom by discovering that the question of the Inspiration of the Bible, either as to its nature or effects, is in no way fundamental to Christianity, least of all to a personal experience of the grace and power of the Lord Jesus.* It has been glad tidings to them that a man need not formulate a theory of Inspiration, verbal, plenary, or dynamic; nor even settle the quality or question of the fact of Inspiration in order to become possessed by the Spirit and life of the Saviour. If he can trust the Scripture records so as to get from them the "good news" of the forgiveness of sins, to see the express image of the Living Christ, to know the meaning of His life and mission as a witness to that Eternal Life which is God's gift, in His Son,† and to walk in the Light of God as it shines in the face of Christ, it is enough for peace with God, and for fellowship with the Father and with the Son; and ought to be enough for

* Principal Rainy says, "The question of the nature and effects of Inspiration is not fundamental in the Christian argument."—*Critical Review*, Vol. I., p. xi.

† 1 John, v. 9-12.

fellowship with all the sons of God. "He has the witness in himself."* Like Paul he knows *whom* he has believed, and does not depend for his assurance and joy on any external document or authority whatever, but on the Redeemer of men. Nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord; not the discrepancies in the accounts of the Last Supper, or the contradictions in Kings and Chronicles; not the cruelties of Deborah and Saul, or the "cursings" of the Psalmists; not the paroxysms of despair in Ecclesiastes, or the unscientific records in Genesis. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

It is strange that it should ever have been thought necessary to demand assent to a theory of the Inspiration of Scripture in order to get into the Kingdom of God, when we recollect that myriads of God's saints and heroes no more thought of either fact or theory of Inspiration than the child thinks of the bakery and the baking processes as it eats and enjoys its morning meal; and yet many souls have been thrust into darkness, and some into despair, by teachers who have identified the salvation of the soul with the acceptance of the absolute accuracy of every line of the Bible. As the Pope, under the guise and in the name of Christ, has been made Antichrist, so

* Cf. Moody's experience. He says: "I remember one night when this Book (the Bible) was the driest and darkest Book in the universe to me. The next day it became entirely different. I had been born of the Spirit; but before I knew anything of the mind of God I had to give up my sin." *Andover Review*, XVII., 365. See also Dr. Dale in the *Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, C. 1. "The Argument from Experience."

the Bible has been lifted on to Christ's throne, and into Christ's place, under the guise of His authority and in His name. The Bible makes no such claim for itself. Gospel and prophecy carry you straight to Jesus, tell you that He is the Christian religion ; and to believe in Him, know Him, love and obey Him, this is life, yea, the life that is life indeed.

II. Still, never were we so forcibly taught as now, that man is made to know, and that God desires him to know, His Revelation—*what* it is, *how* it has come, and *what* has been its history, as well as what it is for. Therefore it has come to pass that Science students, who turned with fear and trembling from the methods they employed in the laboratory to the study of the Bible, and at first found perplexing problems springing up on all sides, have at last obtained relief and joy by approaching the Scriptures in the same strictly scientific way — a way that involves

- (1) A total expulsion of all theories as to what *ought* to be in the Bible ;
- (2) A frank acceptance of it just as it is ;
- (3) A thorough examination of its books, of their contents, their history, their place in the life of Israel and of the world ;
- (4) And a study of any modifications to which they may have been subjected since their original production.

That acute and learned man of science, James Hinton, says : " I find the Bible the secret of all truth ; all I truly know I derive from it ; and yet I

would say to every man, Don't believe the Bible if you cannot see clearly that it is true. Deal freely, boldly by it. Don't be afraid. 'Tis a friend, not an enemy. If you don't treat it straightforwardly, it cannot do its service to you."* That saying of the great aurist opened the eyes of a man of science, prepared him for a frank facing of the Book itself, in the same humble, sincere, and reverent way in which he approached Nature, God's other Great Book.

(1) So coming, he sees at a glance that the Bible, like the literature of other peoples, has grown from the germ in the prophetic poem of Genesis to its perfect flower in the Gospel and Epistles of John. It covers a long period in the history of the Jews and in the history of the world ; reports the birth, life, and death of various intellectual and moral conceptions, and places on its shelves, in a truly catholic spirit, the traditions, remains, legends and histories of the most ancient peoples of the earth. Different documents are put together in the same Book. Signs of editorial activity abound. The manuscripts have been subjected to the same sort of accidents as Homer's "Iliad" or Shakespeare's plays. God has not been pleased to give us an infallible text, and therefore we are to be prepared for inaccuracies, omissions, and corrections. As Nature herself struggles towards her perfect ideal, so, as a matter of undeniable fact, the truth of God struggles towards its full and final manifestation in the Scriptures.

**Life*, p. 214.

(2) Again, on the face of the volume it appears to this student of Science that the *Revelation* is a history —a history of God's work in and for men, for their redemption from evil, and participation in His holiness. The truth is *acted* rather than spoken. The light shines in elect souls. The Divine mind is manifested in the faith and failure, aspirations and sufferings, discipline and progress of a God-led and God-governed people ; and the ever-broadening Revelation partakes of the vicissitudes of their manifold life. The “elect people” of Israel vary, and so does the interest and meaning and power of the story of their experiences. Sometimes they are on the heights of transfiguration, and the blaze of Inspiration fairly dazzles the beholder with its supernal glory ; but again they are in the valley, defeated by the gathering demons, and the record being historically accurate, the Inspiration, whilst indubitably real, is painfully thwarted in its progress and feeble in its results. The Book of Esther is not cast in the same mould, or pervaded by the same tone and temper, as the Gospel of Luke.* Ecclesiastes is unspeakably inferior to the First Epistle of John. One is a cowardly moan, the

*Cf. Keil. *Esther*, 315. Luther says of *Esther* and the *Maccabees* : “They are too Judaising, and contain many heathenish improprieties.” Bertheau writes : “Esther and Mordecai are full of a spirit of revenge and hostility, not to Gentile ways, but to the Gentiles themselves, of cruelty and ungodly confidence in a victory over the world by worldly power and the employment of worldly means.” *Esther* was not canonical according to Athanasius, and is not inspired, according to Cheyne, *Expositor*, IV. Series, V. Vol., p 259. See Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, 174-5. Driver, *Introduction to the Bible*, 442.

other is a confident and piercing soldier-summons to battle for eternal truth and life.*

(3) Hence it follows that the latest portion of Revelation is the final and supreme judge of all the rest. Doubtless, Abraham is our father, but he is not our master, and does not set the style for our life in all things. The prophets inspire and lead, but they do not rule. The law comes by Moses, but grace and truth, in their fulness and glory, come by Jesus Christ. Christ Himself expressed and endorsed the evolutionary idea of Revelation ; contrasted the imperfections of the older day with the more luminous and spiritual character of His own teaching ; expressly abrogated some of the enactments of Moses, and represented Himself as "*The Way, the Truth, and the Life.*" The New Testament compels us to affirm that such passages as 1 Kings xxii., 23, though historically accurate, and truly representing what men thought of God, and in what ways they then claimed His aid, yet contain gross misrepresentations of His character. Jephthah does not occupy the same platform as Isaiah. Jeremiah points to the arrival of

**Cf.* Matthew Henry on Job vi., 8-13. "It is as ill-said as anything we meet with in his discourses." Job ix., 25-35. "Job grows more and more querulous. . . . They who indulge a complaining humour know not to what indecencies, nay, impieties, it will bring them." Jeremiah xx., 14 to 18. "What nonsense it is to curse a day." "It is a brutish and barbarous thing." Milton says the Bible "ofttimes relates blasphemy not nicely, it describes the carnal sense of wicked men inelegantly, it brings in holiest men passionately murmuring against Providence through all the arguments of Epicurus; in other great disputes it answers dubiously and darkly to the common reader." *Areopagitica*, p. 51.

the Lord our Righteousness ; and so the Scriptures, in their development, carry us into the radiant presence of Christ Jesus, the one and only infallible Judge. The theory of evolution, dreaded by some, has certainly become the gracious deliverer of many a student of the Word.*

III. To others relief has come through the *analysis of the idea of Divine Inspiration*, the accurate fixing of the quality of the fact as it appears in different books of Scripture, and in the whole of the Scriptures, and the recognition of God as immanent in all our human life.

As applied to men, our experience interprets for us the meaning of the word "Inspiration." We have known inspiring men—men in whose presence we have breathed a bracing air, felt a quickened emotion a roused conscience, a stronger will. Used as to books, the term denotes a familiar fact. For some a

* "The supreme contribution of evolution to religion is that it has given it a clearer Bible. . . . It has arranged the Bible in a new way, and made it as different as Science has made the world. . . . Our difficulties arise simply from an old-fashioned or unscientific view of what the Bible is, and are similar to the difficulties found in Nature when interpreted either without the aid of Science or with the Science of many centuries ago."—Professor Henry Drummond, in *Expositor*, Third Series, Vol. I., p. 105.

"The laborious investigations and critical work of modern scholars are enabling us to perceive still more clearly what mankind has long believed, that the history which produced the world's Bible, and which culminated in the world's Christ, was not a series of isolated wonders or detached events, but a progressive course of Revelation, a highway for the coming of the Lord."—Dr. Newman Smyth.

I could cite numbers of "cases" of men and women who have been led out of darkness into light, from scepticism to faith, by this historical and evolutionary conception of the Bible.

baptism in Browning or Tennyson is to the mind like a plunge into the sea, or as a ride on horseback over breezy downs is to muscle and nerve. In inspiring energy the Bible takes the highest rank, and by that mighty and unrivalled force holds its primacy in the world of literature. It breathes into the reflective and devout reader a moral and spiritual power that is an all-sufficient witness to the exalted character of its teaching and the divinity of its source.

All that everybody admits. What is the fact or quality additional commonly imported by the word as applied to the Scriptures ; and is it, or is it not, suggested and demanded by the facts ?

It is that the Bible contains ideas and a message concerning God's character, purposes and provisions for men given by Himself, which are true, and are to be received as true ; and to be admitted to the control of the thoughts and acts of men in relation to God and His entire Revelation of Himself, in the oldest Revelation of all, Nature, and in the newest, the life of to-day, as well as in the Old and New Testaments ; and which being received as true, *forthwith set up a series of self-verifying operations within our experience as individuals ; operations which are confirmed by the experience of the whole Christian race.** “Every Scripture inspired of God is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely, unto every good work.”

* Cf. *Inspiration as Revelation.* Section XII.

All that is in the facts ; and that is all that is in the facts. That is a practical, working, and sufficient conception of Inspiration. It covers the whole area of Scripture, and it imports nothing that is irrelevant, and it can be tested as to its truth in the same experiential way as other assertions on similar subjects.

Now, that Inspiration was of *men* — of souls. Prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Historians wrote with a purpose, not as mere journalists or newspaper men ; they were seers, and went down below the surface of things that they might come upon the great hands of God fashioning the life of the world. The Book is the *report* of the experiences of God-inspired souls ; and while, in its provision of complete furnishing for character-building after the highest type, it incontestably proves itself inspired, yet the Inspiration is in and through *men*, with their limitations and weaknesses, moods and mists, inaccuracies and sins ; and, besides, that Inspiration was committed by men to records which have disappeared, and of whose original words, term for term, sentence for sentence, we have not authentic evidence, although we have abundant reason for holding that we read in our English Versions the *substance* of the statements as written by the first writers or as revised and rearranged by their successors. Still, though there is not a man who has given a day's attention to the question who holds the complete freedom of the Bible from inaccuracy—no, not one—yet that the men were themselves taught of God, and communicated His mind and will concerning salvation and

righteousness, is demonstrated beyond misgiving in the heart and mind of all who seek to know the will and character of the Father and Redeemer of men. God, who fills the Universe with His presence, and is immanent in the long life of the world, has not left Revelation without splendid testimony to His glorious indwelling. He has breathed into it His own imperishable life; and amongst the proofs of His activity it is supreme.

IV. Some minds reach the same goal of assurance and peace by a swifter course and a different path. To them intellectual repose comes by the acceptance of the canon—

“ In every work regard the author's end,
Since none can compass what they ne'er intend.”

Remembering that the Bible is the history of God's eternal purpose and effort to redeem mankind from the Dominion of Evil, they do not require that it should supply a treatise on political economy or a guide to biological science. If Genesis reveals God creating man and planning his salvation, that is enough; they do not go to it for geology or astronomy. To them the efforts to reconcile the poem of creation with the last book on paleontology are worse than futile. It is like going to Browning for anatomy, or to the “May Queen” for a knowledge of consumption. It is enough that they get in the Bible the “Word of God,” that which He Himself speaks concerning Himself, His treatment of our sin, His work for our race, His provision for our destiny; the “Word” He speaks “in the sense of annexing

thereto His authority, making it evidently Divine, whether it be a promise or a threatening, a principle or a fact!"

So we come to that great truth that the real test of a man's faith in the Inspiration of Scripture *is in the spiritual and ethical use to which he puts its teaching.* True it is, however we may kick against it, that each man must judge of the Book and of the books for himself. "The spiritual man judgeth all things." No Church, nor all the Churches, can really settle these questions for him. And in exercising this judgment, here is our consolation : "As for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you : but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true and is no lie, and even as it taught you, abide in Him." *Abide in Him,* and He will guide you into all truth, and aid you in making that perfect use of His Revelation which shall not only sustain you under any burdens, but also render you an epistle of Christ read and known of all men.

III.

THE FOUR WAYS TESTED BY SCIENCE.

THIS is a scientific age, and all our religious questions must be faced in the scientific spirit, and dealt with in the scientific method ; remembering that the scientific spirit is that of unswerving fidelity to truth and fact, and the scientific method that of sifted and verified common sense ; or, as a leading scientist, Professor Huxley, has said, “It is common sense at its best—*i.e.*, rigidly accurate in observation, and merciless to fallacy in logic,” seeing “facts as they are, or, at any rate, without the distortion of prejudice, and reasoning from them in accordance with the dictates of sound judgment.”

Thus it is the prerogative of Science to begin with the collection and examination of facts, then proceed to their analysis and classification, and, finally, to arrive at the laws which they disclose. Science refuses to accept a theory, or frame a definition, or deduce a law, until it has fully investigated and severely tested all the available facts within the realm of enquiry, found out their relation to one another, and discovered the general principles under which they naturally take their place.

It was from something of this impulse that I started this discussion, by giving in the previous section a series of "cases" exhibiting the Four Ways in which the difficulties of full and hearty belief in the Bible, as an inspired and authoritative Revelation of God and man, made by the Father Himself to His child, have been met and conquered. As a physician might report from a lengthened series of records put down in his consulting room "Note Book," so I set out from actual observation, and, indeed, I may say, experiment, the facts I have seen and examined, not in one or two instances, but in a succession of personal histories, all exemplifying, under different conditions, the ways in which the problem of the Bible has been more or less satisfactorily solved.

It is not too much to say that we have yet to vindicate the place and power and eternal worth of Christian facts as subjects for scientific study. "Conversion" is as indisputable as the electric current, and its effects are as arresting and convincing. The place and power of the Bible in the spiritual life of man, of the individual, and of the race, are as demonstrable to the trained observer as the place and power of the actinic energy in a beam of light. Christianity is an experience not less than a record, a contemporary force as well as a past. The phenomena of the religious consciousness are accessible in London to-day as they were in Jerusalem at the beginning of our era. The powers which free men from sin are as actual, if not as visible and tangible, as those that deliver him from barbarism and death. "Regeneration by the Holy Spirit" fills

the field of Christian facts as distinctively as gravitation pervades sun and stars, earth and sky. The spiritual man is as real as the physical man, the reasoning man, or the commercial man; and the "supernatural" order has ways of attesting its presence and sway as convincing to the appropriately trained observer as those which witness to the scientific mind the qualities and laws of the "natural" order. "The basis of religion lies in the very essence of man's nature as a thinking, self-conscious being." "Religion must, indeed, be a thing of the heart; but in order to elevate it from the region of subjective caprice and waywardness, and to distinguish between that which is true and false in religion, between the lowest and most corrupt and the highest and purest forms of religion, we must appeal to an objective standard. That which enters the heart must first be discerned by the intelligence to be true. It must be seen as having in its own nature a right to dominate feeling, and as constituting the principle by which feeling must be judged and regulated."* From first to last, then, religion is concerned with knowledge. It is based on it, springs from it, and grows by it. It embraces facts of nature and human nature, events of history and biography, the phenomena of the consciousness of individuals and of communities and of races; and it is the business of the Christians of these last days to insist that these facts and events do not escape a thoroughly scientific study.

* *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, by John Caird, D.D., pp. 160, 174.

I have spoken of the "trained observer;" for to him "cases" are not merely individual instances, but typical illustrations of large masses of similar or related facts, samples of far-reaching "uniformities of nature," beautiful exemplifications of the operation of universal "laws;" and in their accumulation comprehensive of all the phenomena that can yield any assistance in arriving at truth on the subject in question. The untutored ploughman sees in the *Ammonites giganteus*, against which he stumbles in the field, a strange and mysteriously carved stone exciting a momentary wonder; and that is all. The geologist recognises in the same fossil an eloquent witness to the facts and features of the Portland-Oolite-world, gives it its place in the long evolution of animal life, and, if necessary, can use it as an exemplification of the laws of earth-building. So in the "four cases" I have cited, some will merely see four individual students of the Bible. To them the first is a man who believes in the Bible because he believes in the Christ the Bible reveals. The second of the group roams joyously through the ample domains of Revelation, because he sees the Book growing under his eyes, page after page, oracle following oracle, and song joining song. The next starts with a theory of the character of the Book, reads its contents in the light of his foregone hypothesis, and clings to the Bible and all it contains, it may be with unquivering steadfastness associated with scant intelligence, or perhaps with hesitation and knowledge; but in either case he is largely at the mercy of the theory from which he starts. The fourth enquirer, finding that never did

key so well fit lock, or machine so effectively produce the work for which it was made, forthwith trusts the Bible with all his heart, and follows it whithersoever it leads. But the observer who knows that *the law of causation* rules in the spiritual as in the natural world, takes these isolated instances as representative of general facts; as patterns of the "uniformities" of spiritual nature, and illustrations of the laws in obedience to which men come to be swayed by a satisfying faith in the Word God has given for the salvation and guidance of the race.

In the *first* "case" he sees the leader of an exceeding great army of Christians, who, having heard the facts of Christianity, and discovered that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, gives the Book a primary place in his life and affection and use.

In the *second*, is exemplified the experience of a growing number inside and outside our Churches; a number who gratefully endorse the witness of Professor Drummond in the words: "The theory of the Bible which makes belief in a Revelation possible to the man of Science, Christianity owes to the *scientific method*."

In the *third*, there is the representative of a large but diminishing company who put themselves to school to the Bible at the bidding and guidance of the theologians, and, as we might expect, with differing results, according to the theological school to which the theologians themselves belong.

In the *fourth*, we embrace that great multitude,

whose faith in the Scripture stands in the splendour of its spiritual victories, and the increasing beauty and power of its ethical successes.

Since then, by one method or other, or by more than one, or by all these methods, the *subjective*, the *scientific*, the *theological*—which ought also to be the scientific, but often is not—and the *utilitarian*, men reach their faith in the Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative Revelation of God and of Religion, let us try to find out their respective values.

I. The gains of the first method are obvious, solid, and enduring. At once, and by the directest route, it takes the man to the heart of the Scriptures, and gives him the key to their fullest meanings and richest inspirations. Christ is Himself the substance of Revelation, the Alpha and Omega of the Bible. The Old Testament describes the Divine administration of the ages as a preparation of men for His advent; the Gospels record His appearing, message, and ministry, life and death, resurrection and ascension; the Acts and Epistles describe the continuation of His work in the dawning experiences of the New Society He creates, and through it upon the Old Order He changes and reforms. The Bible “is made” Christ to him, and “Christ is made wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

Usually a confidence in the Bible that starts in this subjective way lifts a man into the region where the controversies of theologians and the criticisms of scholars do not enter. Practically, he has an inerrant and infallible Bible, and its authority in all spiritual

and practical matters is absolute. He hears and obeys. The Will of Christ is supreme and unquestioned, and any accretions of error that may have gathered about the organ through which that Will is conveyed are but as dust in the balance.

"If e'er he
Hear a voice, 'Believe no more,'
And hear an ever-breaking shore
That tumbles in a godless deep,
A warmth within the breast will melt
The freezing reason's colder part;
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stands up and answers, 'I have felt.' "

Cowper pictures the serenity and joy born to such souls in

"The cottager who weaves at her own door
Pillow and bobbins all her little store,
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes
Her title to a treasure in the skies."

It is the defect of this method that, though it may adequately meet all the needs of the personal life, it is of little value to others. Coleridge has popularized it in the oft-quoted saying, "In the Bible there is more that *finds* me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being, and whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit." That is true and satisfactory for Coleridge; but it affords slender help to one whom the Bible has not yet found in the depths of his being. It is akin to the easy theory of Inspiration which says, "That

which inspires is inspired. The Bible inspires me, therefore it is inspired ; " but that is a method with which neither Science nor the Church can be content. It is essentially subjective, and although it does not suffer from all the defects of a merely emotional religion, because there is a solid core of knowledge in it, yet the feeling and knowledge are both individual, and do not exclude caprice and exaggeration, misconception and distortion. Therefore it is necessary, whilst appreciating the process and its results at their full value, we should add to the faith in the Bible that comes by this experience of the grace and strength of Christ, the knowledge that can be acquired by other methods of approaching the Word of God.*

II. The advocates of the *scientific* method are confronted by the objection that they degrade the Book they examine, strip it of its unique authority, and make its " Inspiration nothing more than a higher

* Since the Reformation the chief practical apologetic has been the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*. It is what is called the experimental evidence, and the Christians of the Reformation period were only reviving the logic of the primitive Christians in using it. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I., Chs VII., IX.; Baxter's *Reasons of the Christian Religion*; John Owen, *The Reason of Faith*; Lewis French Stearns, *The Evidence of Christian Experience*. I have dealt with this subject more at length in my *Christian Certainties*, Chs. I., II., III. One illustration I may add, James Gilmour of Mongolia (Life 272, 276, 281), says, "The greatest proof of the Divine source of the Book is that it fits the soul as well as a Chubb's key fits the lock it was made for." "What helps me most just at present is the Psalms." "The current (of devotion in them) always sets towards God, and in most places is strong and deep."

potency of what every man possesses in some degree.”* To speak of the Bible as a “growth,” and to study the way in which this Divine Library of Books has advanced from stage to stage, seems to some minds to exclude God. But surely it ought not! Do we banish God from His material creation, from the bright and cloudless firmament, the teeming earth, the glowing dawn, the sombre, solitary hills, and the shimmering sea, when we speak of the birth, life and death of stars and suns? Do we stop the music of the stars

“For ever singing as they shine
The Hand that made us is Divine?”

Or is God less manifestly ruling the life of nations, and of the generations of men, because we believe

“That through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the
process of the suns?”

No! “In Him we live and move and have our being,” from infancy to childhood, from youth to old age; why, then, should it be thought a thing incredible that the literature of the Bible, expressly provided for our needs, should have started in the visions and utterances of those “holy prophets who have been since the world began,” and advanced at long intervals and with painful slowness, “by divers portions and in divers manners,” through at least fifteen centuries, “to its final form and crown,” at “the end of these days” in “the words spoken unto us by His Son, whom He appointed heir to all things, and through whom also He made the ages?”

* Morell’s *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 127, 129.

The fact of the gradual increase of the body of Revelation is too patent to need proof. As the meteorite is the cosmical unit, and stars and nebulæ, comets and suns are meteorites at different degrees of temperature and in different stages of aggregation, and thus the cycle of the universe consists of meteor, nebulæ, sun and world, thereby affording the materials by which the man of Science may weld all previous knowledge of the universe into one harmonious whole,* so the "Word of the Lord" in the soul and on the lip of the prophet is the Biblical unit; and history and vision, poem and proverb, Gospel and Apocalypse, old world tradition, and latest speech, or letter of Paul, are the same "Word" uttered through different prophets and under varying conditions, thus making the cycle of Divine Teaching for man a complete and effective organic unity.

Everybody knows that David's Bible was not so copious as that of Malachi; that the "oracles" of Isaiah followed one another in a certain definite chronological order; that Jeremiah added to "his words many like words;"† and that there is a newer and an older Scripture. In short, evolution is in the Bible as blood is in the race of man, and in each part of the Bible as blood is in each man. Evolution is there as fact, and it is there as history. Moses anticipated and expressed it. The letter to the Hebrews asserts it. Augustine saw it in his day, and rejoiced to think that as the New Testament lay concealed in

* Cf. Professor Lockyer, in a Paper read before the Royal Society, November 16, 1887.

† Jeremiah xxxvi., 32.

the Old, so the Old was laid open in the New. Jonathan Edwards uses it to fine issues in tracing the *History of Redemption*. In fact, what is new about this doctrine of Science is, first its language, and next its universal application ; but, in other words, our fathers of all ages of the Church employed it to interpret what they called the "dispensational" character of the communications made by God to men. For "a truth revealed by God is never a truth out of relation to previous thought. He leads men to feel their moral and intellectual needs before He satisfies either. There was a preparation for Hebrew Monotheism, as there was a preparation for the Gospel of Christ."* God adapts His teachings to the needs of His pupils, and, therefore, there are differences in phrase and setting, advances in idea, expansions of thought, and ascents in illumination from Enoch to Noah, and from Abraham to Jesus Christ.

Moreover, it is the mark of Christianity to appropriate and use everything that is true and good. As the fresh seals are opened by the hands of God's angels, Christianity steps forward, absorbs the new knowledge, and employs the new methods, for the guidance and enriching of the life of man. It is the function of Science to explain, that is to make things plain by arranging facts under laws, and so lifting difficulties out of the way by showing the facts in their "sweet reasonableness." Therefore when Science comes to the Bible, as it must come, it gives us to see that the Bible is not a ready-made Book, created by

* The late Rev. Aubrey Moore, *Lux Mundi*, p. 66. Tenth Edition.

an Almighty fiat in less than six days; but like other creations of God, material and literary, it is the slow growth of ages, and a witness to the active presence and living ministry of the God of the Book, in the life and experience of those ages. For "the one absolutely impossible conception of God in the present day is that which represents Him as an Occasional Visitor. Science had pushed the deists' god farther and farther away, and at the moment when it seemed as if he would be thrust out altogether, Darwinism appeared, and, under the disguise of a foe, did the work of a friend. It has conferred upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit, by showing us that we must choose between two alternatives, either God is everywhere present in Nature, or He is nowhere."* So Science, through its theory of evolution applied to historical studies, has brought the Bible, which is part of the history of the living God, from the regions remote from our whole human life to which it had been carried, and placed it at the very centre of the every-day life of man; so that its claims for justice are heard in our politics as well as in our Churches, and its ministry is extended to the social and civic needs of man, not less than to his individual well-being. The "Word" is becoming incarnate again; and as at the first Christ came down to our life to redeem it, so Science has taken the Bible down into the literature of the world to save and to uplift all other literature. The Bible is thus repeating the history of Christ, and becoming immanent in all our life. Indeed, it is as

* *Lux Mundi*, p. 73.

though the Bible were given to us anew, and Revelation itself were being revealed. The age that has widened life by Science has opened out the unsearchable riches of the Scriptures by scientific and reverent, patient and sustained investigation. We know the Hebrew and Greek writings to a degree and with a clearness and fulness far surpassing that of our predecessors. The toil of men like Ewald and Delitzsch, Godet and Beet, Cheyne and Driver, Ellicott and Lightfoot, Smith and Duff, has placed within our reach the ideas of God in surprising abundance. As creation under the electric light of evolution is manifesting the infinite and eternal Jehovah, the *living* and working God, so the Scriptures under the same radiance make visible to us the *living* and redeeming God, the Father and "Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

We must, therefore, be on our guard. Our distinctions are often misleading and mischievous. Peter was rebuked for the false lines he drew between Jew and Gentile, and taught that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." Professor Freeman began his work as Teacher of Modern History at Oxford by deprecating the sharpness of the distinction sometimes conceived to exist between Ancient and Modern History. Six months afterwards Dr. Hatch, inaugurating his labours as Reader in Ecclesiastical History in the same place, protested against the division between Civil and Ecclesiastical History, and said, "You cannot put your finger upon any event recorded in the annals of a Christian

country since Christianity began, and say, ‘This belongs to its civil history and has no connection, not even the remotest, with the history of the Church of Christ.’” The web of history is woven of one piece ; it reflects the unity of the human life of which it is the record ; we cannot isolate any group of facts and consider that no links of causation connect them with their predecessors or their contemporaries. Again, how confusing is the division of life into “spiritual and secular,” and into what fearful misjudgments it leads us ! Nor is the mischief less which so completely detaches the Bible, not only from the sacred books of the world, but from all other literature, as to preclude the incalculable gains which proceed from the freest use of the scientific method in the investigation of its history and contents, purposes and achievements.

III. I ought to apologise for speaking of the third method as *theological*, and not actually identical with the scientific. For theology is not only a Science, but the Queen of Sciences, and every theologian ought to work unfalteringly by the scientific method. But all that I mean is apparent from the “case” which I have taken from experience, and given as a sample of the third way in which some readers of the Bible find intellectual rest. A man comes to the Scriptures having made up his mind as to what “Inspiration” is. It is this or it is that. It is a general superintendence of the Biblical writers, guaranteeing them against misconceptions and mistakes ; or it is gradational, one thing here and another there ; or it is absolute dictation of word by word, and the writer is as a pen

in the hand of God. If his theory happens to square with the facts, all is well—it will help him in interpretation, and place him in the attitude for receiving truth and profit; but if it is not in agreement with the contents of the Bible, he himself will suffer, and the advantages that he will gain from use of the Book will be lessened both for himself and for others. For example, a man comes to the Bible, saying, "It is inspired in every part of it; inspired equally in every part of it, in every verse and line, and in every particle of every verse and line. Now Inspiration, he adds, involves inerrancy, and therefore there is not an error of any kind within its pages from Genesis to Revelation."* So he travels boldly from page to page, reconciling the ethics of eighteen centuries before Christ with those of eighteen centuries after Christ; harmonizing passages that will not harmonize; qualifying and modifying, but not explaining; unconsciously adding this fact, and with equal unconsciousness withdrawing that fact, all the while wholly undisturbed himself; but, alas, supplying the materials of the enormous stock-in-trade of the

* Cf. for this post-Reformation theory, Dr. Ladd, on the *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. II., 177. "The Bible finally came to be regarded as absolutely free from all error whatsoever—historical, chronological, or typological—even its letters and vowel-points and accents were to be considered as infallibly inspired." Calovius declared it impious and profane audacity to change a single vowel-point in the Word of God, and to substitute a smooth-breathing for a rough one or a rough for a smooth; and therefore it is not surprising that he should pray daily—"Imple me, Deus, odio haereticorum." *Hagenbach Hist.*, Doc. II., 153. This theory obtained credal expression for a brief period in the Helvetic Consensus Formula of 1675, which, "in defiance of historical facts asserts even the Inspiration of the Masoretic vowel-points."—Schaff, *History of the Church*, XII., 536.

opponents of Christianity, and sometimes causing the enemies of Christianity to blaspheme.

Say, on the other hand, with Ackermann, "Inspiration, according to the Biblical conceptions, is to be thought of as a vivifying and animating influence upon the spiritual nature of man, by which its activity and susceptibility are extraordinarily elevated, so that what otherwise would lie outside of its circle of vision, and be dark and concealed, appears clear to the inner power of perception as though made its subject and content," and you start with a definition which is obviously applicable to the results of Inspiration, which may be most accurately described as *revelations of truth*; but it would not be accurate to employ it to describe all the Proverbs of Agur, or all the contents of the Book of Esther.*

* Cf. *Systematic Theology*, by A. H. Strong, D.D., page 95. "By the Inspiration of the Scriptures, we mean that special Divine influence upon the minds of the Scripture-writers in virtue of which their productions, apart from errors of transcription, and when rightly interpreted, together constitute an infallible and sufficient rule of faith and practice." He gives the following instances of the use of the word "Inspiration," viz.,

- "(1) Inspiration without Revelation, as in Luke or Acts, Luke i., 1, 3.
- (2) Inspiration, including Revelation, as in the Apocalypse, Rev. i., I, II.
- (3) Inspiration without illumination, as in the prophets, 1 Peter i., 11.
- (4) Inspiration including illumination, as in the case of Paul, 1 Cor. ii., 12.
- (5) Revelation without Inspiration, as in God's Word from Sinai, Ex. xx., 1-22.
- (6) Illumination without Inspiration, as in modern preachers, Eph. ii., 20.

Some, like Priestly, have held that the Gospels are authentic, but not inspired. We, therefore, add to the proof of the genuineness and credibility of Scripture the proof of its Inspiration."

Another definition is that, of Park: "Inspiration is such an influence over the writers of the Bible, that all their teachings, which have a religious character, are trustworthy."

It is notorious that theologians have been prolific in theories; verbal and plenary, intuitional and dictational, illuminative and dynamical, and we do not question that the theories have been of some service. Science itself has gained in the exposition of the phenomena of colour by the supposition of the existence of a luminiferous ether; but we must not forget that a theory is only a theory; that a false one may do grave injury; that, as George Meredith says, "there is nothing like a theory for blinding the wise." Like a dead thorn, shorn of all beauty and bereft of all life, it may set up irritations that will seriously diminish the pleasure and fetter the freedom of life. Just as a current of cold air turns the floating mists into crystals and the winds pelt us with them, so the speculations of some theologians have not infrequently crystallized into hard, sharp-edged dogmas, with which Christian men have attempted to damage one another. We do well, therefore, to keep in mind the saying of Dr. W. B. Pope: "The Bible is a Divine human collection of books, the precise relation of human and Divine in which is a problem which has engaged much attention, and has not yet been, though it may be, adequately solved. The Holy Ghost never defines Inspiration as applied to the whole body of Scripture; we have to construct our theory from the facts, and our theory must take those indisputable facts as it finds them."

Theology must free itself of the speculative and purely metaphysical element, and be content with the slow but sure acquisitions obtained by the severe employment of the scientific method. "We must

approach with humility and veneration to unroll the volume of creation (and of Revelation), to linger and meditate therein, and with minds washed clean from opinions, to study it in purity and integrity.”*

IV. It is scarcely necessary to test at length the fourth “case.” It is admitted. Human experience is one long and cogent proof of its efficiency. The rank given to the Bible in the literature of the most civilized peoples of the world is a sufficient vindication of the method which judges it by its fruits. It stands the test of the purest, highest, and broadest utilitarianism. It is because the Bible belongs not only to the literature of knowledge, but also to the literature of power that it wins its way into the confidence and secures the allegiance of men. As Luther said in face of a great difficulty, so men feel, “The Word will do it ;” and, therefore, in response to those who would call them away from the Scriptures, the answer is given, “To what else shall we go; it only has the words of eternal life.” The verdict of the religious consciousness of men testifies to the unparalleled ethical and spiritual energy of the Bible. The experience, not of an individual here and there, but of communities of men such as the Christian Churches, witnesses to its ability to give victory over sin, transfigure the face and form of sorrow, and build the finest and highest manhood. Nor is its reproductive energy apparent only in men ; but it is manifest also in the realm where it is confessedly chief, in literature ; as seen in the “Epistle to

* Bacon's Works, V., 132-3.

Diognetus," the "Confessions of Augustine," the "Imitation of Jesus" by Thomas A Kempis, the "Letters of Fenelon," the "Pilgrim's Progress" of Bunyan, the "Paradise Lost" of Milton, the "In Memoriam" of Tennyson, and the preaching of Dinah Morris. Dean Stanley, speaking of a visit to Ewald, wrote: "It is impossible to forget the noble enthusiasm with which this dangerous heretic, as he was regarded in England, grasped the small Greek Testament which he had in his hand as we entered, and said: 'In this little Book is contained all the wisdom of the world ;' and to that grand confession of the great German Biblical scholar all spiritual history says 'Amen !'"*

Singly, each way may conduct to that use of the Bible designed by its Divine Author; but if we put these four methods together, and work them with sincerity and thoroughness, they will yield a conviction of certitude concerning the Inspiration and Authority of the Bible that nothing on earth can shake, and impart a peace "deep as the unfathomed sea,"

"A peace which suffers and is strong,
Trusts where it cannot see,
Deems not the trial way too long,
But leaves the end with Thee."

NOTE.

The Scientific Method.—As one illustration of many that might be offered of the immense literary, spiritual and ethical gains of this way of studying Revelation, I cite the following from Dr. Driver's *Deuteronomy* in the *International Critical Commentary*. In the Preface, pp. xii. f., the Author says: "As a work of the Mosaic age, Deuteronomy, I must own, though intelligible, if it stood perfectly alone—i.e., if the history of Israel had been other than it was—

* Cf. *The Service of the Old Testament in the Making of Men, and the Best Defence of the Bible*, Sections IX. and X.

does not seem to me to be intelligible, when viewed in the light shed upon it by other parts of the Old Testament: a study of it in that light reveals too many features which are inconsistent with such a supposition. The entire secret of its composition, and the full nature of the sources of which its author availed himself, we cannot hope to discover; but enough is clear to show that, however regretfully we may abandon it, the traditional view of its origin and authorship cannot be maintained. The adoption of this verdict of criticism implies no detraction either from the inspired authority of Deuteronomy, or from its ethical and religious value. Deuteronomy marks a stage in the Divine education of the chosen people; but the methods of God's spiritual providence are analogous to those of His natural providence: the revelation of Himself to man was accomplished not once for all, but through many diverse channels (*Heb. i. 1*), and by a gradual historical process; and the stage in that process to which Deuteronomy belongs is not the age of Moses, but a later age. Deuteronomy gathers up the spiritual lessons and experiences not of a single lifetime, but of many generations of God-inspired men. It is a nobly conceived endeavour to stir the conscience of the individual Israelite, and to infuse Israel's whole national life with new spiritual and moral energy, and in virtue of the wonderful combination of the national with the universal, which characterises the higher teaching of the Old Testament, it fulfils a yet wider mission; it speaks in accents which all can still understand; it appeals to motives and principles, which can never lose their validity and truth, so long as human nature remains what it is: it is the bearer of a message to all time."

For proof in detail, see Introduction xix. f., xxv. f. "The Author builds upon the foundation of the prophets, and his primary aim is to create an effectual moral stimulus for realizing the ideals which they had propounded. . . . In a special degree the author of Deuteronomy is the spiritual heir of Hosea."

"Undoubtedly prophetic sanction underlay Deuteronomy. The prophetic teaching of the preceding centuries was the dominant influence under which it was written: its own prophetic authority it bears upon its face." Cf., also pp. lx., lxi.

IV.

ARE THERE ERRORS IN THE BIBLE?

THIS is to many sincere minds the most crucial enquiry on which they can engage concerning the Word of God. On the answer to it depend their confident acceptance of the Scriptures as an authoritative rule of faith and practice, their unhesitating loyalty to Biblical commands, and their comfort and joy in "its exceeding great and precious promises."

To admit any mistake in the record of events, statements of fact or methods of reasoning, is, it is alleged, to remove the Bible from its throne, and leave the Christian to the contradictions of his own mind and the confusions of his own intelligence. What can he do, if there is any doubt as to the integrity and trustworthiness of the history, science, chronology, and ethical teaching of the Word of God? "If the foundations are destroyed," is there anything left for him but dismay and despair? If David did not write every Psalm to which the Hebrews have prefixed his name; if every number, and date, and fact, is not accurate, then a plain man is simply at his wits' end. How shall he know what is true and what is not true? False in one, false in all. Once allow that the Book, as we now have it, is not inerrant, and where is the authentic voice to guide the weary spirit of man into the ways of truth and peace?

It is confessed that any such admissions are disturbing. It would be an unspeakable convenience if the theory of total Biblical inerrancy were according to facts. A book without blemish and without spot:—had God thought it wise to bestow it, would probably have saved us some trouble and introduced some minds to immediate rest. Therefore, it is not surprising that after Luther had ejected the infallible Pope from the supreme direction of the religious life of Europe, the post-Reformation teachers should have proclaimed the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. But it is obviously not God's plan to save us all trouble, either by making error impossible in the study of His material creation, or by rendering mistake impossible in the shaping of our human life. Therefore, if He should have followed the same course in the bestowal of the great gift of Revelation, we ought not to be surprised, nor can we expect to gain anything, either for the Bible or for ourselves, by not frankly admitting the fact. "It is by manifestation of the truth," on this as on all other subjects, "that we commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God." The distinguished Delitzsch says in one of his latest works, "Ever since I began to officiate as an academical tutor, in 1842, I have taken up the standpoint of enquiry, freely surrendering myself to the leadings of truth." That is the right spirit. If the Bible is inerrant from beginning to close, it will appear so all the sooner for the most searching investigation of the critics; and if there are "mistakes" within its covers we shall neither remove them from the Book, nor honour the Author

of the Book, by closing our eyes to them, still less by refusing to admit them, and, least of all, by resorting to any unworthy methods of "explaining" them away.

But it is not the less an unwelcome task to speak about "the earthy" qualities of the "vessel" which contains such "heavenly treasures" as are in our Scriptures. The task, however, is necessary so long as the minds of men are closed against the entrance of the spiritual wealth of God's Revelation by the unwise way in which the "errors" which have gathered about that Revelation, are treated.

For the question is, primarily, if not wholly, one of *facts*. Theories as to the facts are inevitable. Reasoning men cannot rest without a coherent and harmonious explanation of the data they investigate. But we must begin with the facts and make ourselves sure of their real nature and meaning. The claims of other methods of thinking are obsolete. The sun has set, never to rise again, on the plan that originates theories as to what *ought* to be and what *must* be, and then compels the intractable fact to agree therewith. Here is our Bible ; our business is to get at its contents, at the whole of them, in Canticles and Colossians, Judges and John, in the Chronicles and the Apocalypse ; to weigh the sayings of the Old Testament themselves, and not less the sayings of Jesus about the Old Testament. To miss a fact is to open the door to error. To set facts in false relations may originate mistakes ; but if we can get at God's facts and have grace enough to be content with Him and them, we shall not fail of light and peace.

Here are samples of the facts brought to my notice

by sincere and earnest young men, perplexed by the claim made for the Bible as a verbally-inspired volume, totally free from flaw, from Genesis to Revelation.

(1) Stephen is described "as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;" "full of grace and power" (Acts vi., 5-8). That is evidence sufficient of his Inspiration.

Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, was an "inspired" historian. Therefore the record, it is contended, is as inspired as the speaker himself.

Now, according to Luke's report, Stephen says, Abraham bought the sepulchre of the "sons of Hamor in Shechem" (Acts vii., 16); but Genesis xxiii., 17, 18, tells us that Abraham bought it of Ephron the Hittite; and Genesis xxxiii., 19, affirms that Jacob bought it of the sons of Hamor.

I had to tell my friend that John Calvin said, "It is evident an error has been made in the name of 'Abraham ;'" that Adam Clarke was of opinion that the word "Abraham" was an error; and that Dr. Hackett confesses that "Stephen appears to have confounded the two transactions ;" and that, instead of deliverance coming by way of additional manuscripts, "critical researches" fail to give the slightest trace of discrepancies in those manuscripts.*

* Hackett also says, "It is clear from Genesis xxxiii., 19, that Jacob purchased the family tomb at Sychem, and from Genesis xxiii., 1, *seq.*, that Abraham purchased the one at Hebron. . . . The error lies in a single word; and it is quite as likely, judging *a priori*, that the word producing the error escaped from some early copyist, as that so glaring an error was committed by Stephen."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 101.

(2) On another occasion, a medical student consulted me as to the way he should regard the contents of the sixteenth chapter of the First Book of Chronicles. According to the historian, David delivers over to Asaph and his brethren the Psalm to be used in the liturgical service of the temple. But the Psalm distinctly refers in the thirty-fifth verse to the dispersion of the Hebrew people amongst the heathen, and is actually composed of citations from the 96th, 105th, 106th and 107th Psalms, and yet all this is represented as though it were given by David to Asaph. Were the facts exactly so? If we found anything like it in the Saxon chronicle what should we call it? An error is "any wandering or deviation from the truth." Is this such a "deviation?" If it is, will men think we deal fairly with them and with the Bible if we give it a different name because it is in the Bible, or admit it to be an "error," and claim at the same time to have an absolutely inerrant Bible?

(3) A Christian Socialist presented the following "case." There are two accounts of Christ's Sermon on the Mount—one in Matthew and the other in Luke. They differ in various ways, in length and keynote, and, to some extent, as it seemed to him, in spirit; but what he wanted to settle exactly and surely was whether Jesus said, "Blessed are ye *poor*, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven," as Luke writes down? or whether Matthew's is the more accurate report, "Blessed are the poor *in spirit*?" What precisely were the words Jesus employed? Jesus could hardly say both at once. For in Luke

the rich are denounced and are set over against the poor, and, therefore, it seems that the poverty and the wealth are just what men ordinarily mean by poverty and wealth—that is, the absence of the means of living in comfort and happiness on the one hand, and the presence of a luxurious and corrupting fulness of such means on the other. Of this Matthew does not give the faintest hint, but lifts the veil from the inward life, and promises the gracious and benignant rule of God to the heart that is humble and the spirit that is contrite.

Now, that is a real, radical, far-reaching difference, and it is not surprising reflective readers of the Gospels should ask, "Who gives the original form of our Lord's teaching—Matthew or Luke? Which report presents the primitive form of words? How may we be sure of the *ipsissima verba* of our Lord?"

Weiss says, "It is Matthew alone who has retained the original forms. Luke has changed them into blessings directed towards the present subjects of the Kingdom,"* on whom he makes the promises bear instead of on the future. Wendt favours the idea that Luke gives a more exact rendering of the text of the original sayings of the Great Teacher. It is affirmed that the differences in the reports of the sermon are due to the differences in the *purposes* of the two evangelists. But that does not banish the differences, nor does it set us free from the quest for the exact language used by our Lord.

* *The Life of Christ*, Vol. II., 143.

(4) But the facts I have had most frequently to face are those which express the ethical ideas and ideals of the different portions of our Scriptures. It has been put to me in this way: In Deuteronomy xxiv., 16, there is an express statute, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." That is distinct and emphatic; and yet the whole house of Achan is exterminated by equally express and positive enactment for the wrong-doing of the head of the family; and by the same Divine orders the women, children, and nurslings of the cities opposing Israel are entirely annihilated.

Of course, it is not impossible to explain these facts. Canon Mozley, Newman Smyth, and many others, have written most helpfully concerning the morality of the Old Testament. Professor A. B. Bruce has dealt in a masterly manner with the discrepancies in Matthew and Luke in his "critical introduction" to the "Kingdom of God." Dr. Robertson Smith and Canon Driver have rendered many dark passages in the history and literature of Israel luminous, and the practical common-sense of Christian people has made short work of such mistakes as occur in the speech of the first martyr. But all these expositors have admitted the mistakes, the variations, "the deviations from truth," and in explaining them and accounting for them have not claimed to abolish them. These Christian teachers have agreed with the devout and holy Rutherford, who said :

" Though there be errors of number, genealogies,

etc., of writing in the Scripture, as written or printed, yet we hold Providence watcheth so over it, that in the body of articles of faith, and necessary truths, we are certaine with the certainty of faith, it is that same very Word of God, having the same speciall operations of *enlightening the eyes, converting the soule, making wise the simple*, as being lively, sharper than a two-edged sword, full of divinity, life, majesty, power, simplicity, wisdome, certainty, etc., which the prophets of old, and the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles had.”*

They have had the frankness to say with the evangelical and earnest Baxter, “And here I must tell you a great and needful truth, which . . . Christians fearing to confess, by overdoing tempt men to infidelity. The Scripture is like a man’s body, where some parts are but for the preservation of the rest, and may be maimed without death. The sense is the soul of the Scripture, and the letters but the body, or vehicle. The doctrine of the Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and Decalogue, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, is the vital part, and Christianity itself. The Old Testament Letter (written as we have it about Ezra’s time) is that vehicle which is as imperfect as the Revelation of these times was : But, as after Christ’s incarnation and ascension, the Spirit was more abundantly given, and the Revelation more perfect and sealed, so the doctrine is more full, and the vehicle or body, that is, the words are less imperfect and more sure to us ; so that he that

* Samuel Rutherford, *A Free Disputation against pretended Liberty of Conscience*, London, 1649, pp. 365-6.

doubteth of the truth of some words in the Old Testament, or of some circumstances in the New, hath no reason, therefore, to doubt of the Christian religion, of which these writings are but the vehicle or body, sufficient to ascertain us of the truth of the History and Doctrine.”*

Moreover, it is admitted that, “ It is not God’s way to give us an absolutely inerrant Bible, and He has not done it,” so that we are agreed that the Bible we actually have—and the only Bible really available for our use and guidance, the Bible men think about and talk about—is *not* absolutely inerrant. It is confessed that the English versions, both Authorized and Revised, do not actually consist of “ the very Words of God, free from all admixture of error.” It is definitely settled that there is no Hebrew Old Testament, no Greek New Testament, nor any version of either or of both that is free from mistake. The manuscripts are not flawless, although their substantial agreement is marvellous. Even yet criticism finds itself baffled and obliged to capitulate before the difficulty of constructing a clear text. There are “ mistakes ” of copyists, errors in numbers, and in names, and in matters of fact.† Dr. A. B. Davidson says of the text of *Jeremiah*, “ No one supposes the Hebrew immaculate ; Chapter x. is no doubt interpolated, and Chapter xxv. in disorder ; the numerous repetitions in the book are probably, in some cases at least, not original, and the prophecies against the nations are not in their

* Richard Baxter, *The Catechising of Families.* 1683, p. 36. (See Note A.)

† *Thinker*, Vol. I., 329, Rev. J. J. Lias.

original place ; while the numerous difficulties of the text, which in so late a writer ought to be simple (as much of it is), suggest that it is susceptible of improvement in many places, and, apart from conjecture, the Greek (Septuagint) is almost the only help that can be obtained for this purpose.”*

The same writer, speaking of his exposition of *Ezekiel*, says : “The readings of the LXX. have generally been adduced when they presented any important deviation from the Hebrew. In the later chapters, the manuscript of which the Greek is a translation, was in many instances more correct than that of which the present Hebrew is a copy. . . . A number of passages in the text have baffled the ingenuity of the best scholars, and appear to be incurably confused.”

On this subject Principal Whitehouse writes : “*Lower criticism* or textual criticism has shown that the text of the Old Testament—and when I speak of the Bible I am speaking mainly of the Old Testament—is a very uncertain quantity in certain portions of its literature. One has only to compare the divergent numerical details respecting the antediluvian patriarchs in the Masoretic, Septuagint and Samaritan texts, the additions made in the Masoretic Hebrew text, to the briefer narrative contained in the LXX. of 1 Samuel (1 Kings lxx.), Chapter xviii., the striking variations in text and contents of parallel narratives in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, besides an immense host of variants and additions in LXX. or Hebrew text when compared together throughout the entire range of Old

* *Theological Review*, III. 251.

Testament literature (especially prophetic), in order to see that there is some margin of uncertainty as to what the "Word of God" in the old terms of the popularly employed formula textually and precisely means. I fear the problem is far too complex and difficult in some portions of the Old Testament (*e.g.*, in Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), to enable the most skilful scholars to do more than approximate the actual and original text."*

Passing from the text to the *substance* it has long been allowed that the Scriptures have a human and historical colouring. The language is the language of the time, and the speech used by the writers is dyed with the prejudices and limitations of the land of its birth. It is popular and not exact, fluid and not fixed.† The Science of the Bible is not Nineteenth

* *British Weekly*, November 9, 1893.

† Principal Whitehouse says that Bishop Martensen, in his *Christian Dogmatics*, while declaring his preference for the more rigid formula, nevertheless clearly perceives its weakness in seeming to exclude all human elements from the Bible (p. 403). Nearly every word written by this excellent and devout Lutheran may be accepted by a Christian believer in the main conclusions of the Higher Criticism. Very truly and wisely he says, "The oral word is in its nature transitory and vanishing, so also is the swiftly-flowing river of Time in which it is uttered. . . . But Scripture bids the swiftly-flowing river of Time stand still, and gives to the flying Word an abiding and unchangeable presence. . . . Accordingly no historical Revelation can dispense with Holy Scripture" (p. 401). But this view does not, in the mind of the writer, involve verbal infallibility. "Supposing the Evangelists contradict one another in historical and chronological details of the life of Jesus, which do not affect the substance of the Revelation, this does not obscure a single lineament of that portrait of Christ which they have painted in colours given them by the Holy Ghost. Were the historical discrepancies of such a kind as to occasion in one point or

Century Science, and could not have been expected to be such. As the Science is obsolete, so the earlier ethics of Israel are confessedly imperfect. No one regards that portion of the legislation of the Hebrews in which it is said, "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live," as a law for the regulation of our modern life, or treats the imprecatory Psalms—real and sincere, and impassioned enough for the people of God at that stage in their spiritual education—as patterns for the Christian devotion of to-day.* There is an advancing ethical standard by reason of which some of the directions on morals contained in the Old Testament drop out of use, and we accept as exclusively authoritative the higher ethical instructions of our Lord and His Apostles.

Now, I do not think such facts as these ought to disturb the students of the Word of God any more than we should be fretted by the growing pains of youth, the immaturities of early childhood, or the immoralities and infelicities of the earliest literature of nations.† Treat the Bible as the *record* of the other a distorted apprehension of Christ, or, in the least, to disturb the fundamental view of the facts on which the Revelation is based, in this case only would their Inspiration be invalidated. Though the words of Christ may not always be repeated (by John, for example) with literal exactness, this does not invalidate the fact that the reproduction is canonical, provided that they are repeated in the Spirit of whom the Lord Himself said, 'He will bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'"

* *Lux Mundi*, 257.

† The fine sanity of Calvin appears in his remarks on Matthew xxvii., 9. "How the name of Jeremiah crept in, I confess I know not, nor am I seriously troubled about it. That the name of Jeremiah has been put for Zechariah by an error the fact itself shows, because there is no such statement in Jeremiah."

Divine Revelation, made in the process of educating and disciplining the Hebrew people for their special function, of introducing into, and distributing over the world, the universal religion of Christianity, and most of these variations in moral standard, limitations of vision, confusions of judgment, and harshnesses of temper take their right place, naturally and reasonably ; and once in their right place in the long story of the Redemption and Education of the World, they obtain all the explanation and vindication they need. The Bible itself is better understood, truer meanings are found in its facts, and wider horizons are offered by its statements. We get nearer the very ideas of God, and think His thoughts more closely after Him.

Of the "errors in history, chronology and the like," it is certain investigation and criticism will tend in some directions to diminish their number, and in all directions to account for them, or to admit them without the slightest damage to the supreme purpose and practical drift of the book. Scholarship will not hinder, but aid in "the preaching of the Word," and in preventing it from returning to its Author "empty and void." Investigation has proved that Romulus is not a myth, and that the name is the designation of the Founder and Builder of the Eternal City, and so far as I can judge, it is tending with increasing agreement and strength to fix the name of John the Apostle to the Fourth Gospel as its author ; and it is certainly confirming more and more the inherited faith of the Church concerning the genuineness and authority of the writings of our beloved brother Paul.

The chief consideration is, however, that when critical study does not succeed in clearing up the difficulties, or in accounting for errors, it still leaves in unimpeachable integrity, the saving ideas and central facts of the Christian Revelation—all, indeed, for which it was given. Certainty and inerrancy are stamped on its spiritual communications. The Scriptures mediate God to men. There is not one error which renders them less “able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” It abides the supreme organ by which we may “know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

“It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
 In the earthen vessel holding treasure
 Which lies as safe in a golden ewer.
 But the main thing is, does it hold good measure?
 Heaven soon sets right all other matters !”

NOTE A.

Baxter on Inerrancy.—The Rev. William Orme, who enumerates 168 treatises by Richard Baxter, confesses, whilst claiming for him the distinction of the first original writer on Apologetics, that it is difficult to get a clear notion of what Baxter really believes, because his works contain so few definitions, and are, besides, so diffuse. But the passage in *The Catechising of Families* is plain English, and a wayfaring man may, without extraordinary gifts or pains, understand it. Baxter says: “And here I must tell you a great and needful truth, which . . . Christians fearing to confess, by overdoing tempt men to infidelity. The Scripture is like a man’s body, where some parts are but for the preservation of the rest, and may be maimed without death. The sense is the soul of the Scripture, and the letters but the body or vehicle.” (Richard Baxter, *The Catechising of Families*, p. 36).

Now observe—

(1) Baxter is giving advice as to the “catechising of families.” He knows the grave danger of an irrational dogmatism; and is

warning the instructor against unnecessarily creating difficulties for the young by imposing his own *theories* upon the Word of God. That is his purpose. So far the meaning is clear.

(2) Again, he is seeking to rouse the instructor to an unwelcome task, to admit something Christians generally shrink from confessing : they "fear to confess it." They hide it when they can, and "by overdoing" this hiding they "tempt men to infidelity." This is "a great and needful truth" he is writing about. It is "a hard saying," but Baxter will say it. The second point seems as clear as the first.

(3) Baxter discriminates between the *contents* of the Bible and the Bible as "a vehicle."

(a) Some parts may be "maimed without death," others may not. As a man may lose a finger and yet be a man, so, like Calvin, he allows the Bible may have in it a mistake, and yet be not one whit less the reliable Word of God. Whether that be so or not, it is clearly what Baxter says.

(b) He contrasts the *sense* of Scripture, which he defines as its "soul," and the "letters," which form its "body." He describes "the doctrine of the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Decalogue, Baptism and the Lord's Supper," as "*the vital part*" of the Bible "and Christianity itself."

(c) He says the "words" of the New Testament are "less imperfect" than those of the Old Testament, "less imperfect and more sure to us."

(4) He speaks of a man "doubting the truth of some words in the Old Testament, or of some circumstances in the New," and tells him that, though he may do that, he has "no reason therefore to doubt of the Christian religion, of which these writings are but the vehicle or body sufficient to ascertain us of the truth of the history and doctrine."

Again in *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* : Chapter VI. treats "Of the Witness of Jesus Christ, or the demonstrative evidence of His verity and authority, namely, the Spirit, in four parts. (1) Antecedently by prophecy ; (2) Constitutively and inherently, the image of God, on his person, life, and doctrine ; (3) Concomitantly, by the miraculous power and works of Christ and His disciples ; (4) Subsequently, in the actual salvation of men by renovation." Thus, as Prof. Stearns points out, Baxter "deduces the whole system" of Apologetics "from a single principle, and finds a place for every argument," and "avoids the common identificatio

of Revelation and the Bible." In short, he seizes the principle that Christ is the Supreme Authority to the Christian and not the letter of Scripture. "None," says he, "but the Sacred Redeemer of the World, approved by the Father, and working by the Spirit, could do such works as are done on the souls of all that are truly sanctified." "If the tempter should persuade a believer to doubt whether the Gospel be true, or be God's Word, this believer may have recourse into his soul for a testimony to it; hence he can tell the tempter by experience that he hath found the promises of this Gospel made good to him."

That is Baxter's faith. The assertions in the book called *More Reasons* for the Christian Religion are not an actual recantation, after the manner of Augustine: for *More Reasons* was published in 1672, and the family *Catechising* eleven years later, i.e., in 1683; so that if there is any difference it must be allowed that the *Catechising* expresses his most mature thought. There is a difference of purpose in these two books that ought to be observed. In the earlier book, *More Reasons*, he is dealing with "cavillers," "rejecters of the Word;" in the later book he is advising those who have to train others. But in the earlier book, as in the later, he carefully discriminates between the "Word of God" and "the belief," that is, the doctrine professedly based upon the Word of God. He speaks of the "substantial part" of the Scripture in *More Reasons* as he does of the "sense which is the soul of Scripture" in the *Catechising*, and contrasts the "smallest parts" with the "greatest" parts of the Bible. Why does he speak of the "very accidents" having "a perfection in their place"; of "a less accurate style;" and allow that the Evangelists "use not the same method, or order, nor repeat Christ's sayings in the same terms," and add that "in respect to the whole frame it may be best that there should be that diversity of words and order to preserve and declare the same sense and things?"

Why all this if he did not hold, as he afterwards wrote, that some parts of the Bible "may be maimed without death?"

Reasoning with the objector, he says, "We have reason to think that the smallest parts are from the same Author, and that He assisted them in the least as well as in the greatest," and gives his reasons why he takes every history, chronology, genealogy, as certainly true, and every other word which is spoken by a true prophet and apostle as by the Spirit, and not disowned by the Scripture itself, but specially such as you accuse in the Gospel."

But this, he describes as *à priori* reasoning, and most persons allow that in questions of *fact*, such as are here in debate, that reasoning will count for little, and does not aid, but may hinder us, in finding out what the facts are. "Secondly, he says, *à posteriori*, there is no caviller that yet hath proved any falsehood or contradiction in any passage of the Scripture, though the clearing of some of them requires more than vulgar knowledge."

On the whole, then, it appears (1) that the passages quoted from Baxter's writings fairly read do not indicate any real difference of view; (2) if there be any difference, the weight of authority is with the later and more matured decision; (3) and it is an unwarranted conclusion that the temper and tone of his *More Reasons* would have been different if written at the date of his *Catechisin*.

Dr. A. B. Grosart, writing of Baxter, says: "I must note, however, that in his reverence for conscience (other people's) and tenderness he grew. In the outset, I think it is clear that he found it difficult to make allowance for persons who conscientiously differed from him on Church questions, and that he did not easily learn the rule 'put yourself in his place.' Barclay, in his *Religious Societies in the Commonwealth* (p. 333), speaks of how he grew in grace in this respect, and cites some of his gracious language owning a change of view about the Holy Spirit, so bringing him into more sympathy with his early opponents, the Quakers." But there is no evidence that he changed his faith on the problem of the Inerrancy of the Bible.

NOTE B.

Rutherford on Inerrancy.—"It is not necessary to say more than two or three words as to *Rutherford*. If Rutherford knew English, and really wished to convey the idea that he admitted errors, reluctantly it may be, but actually and most assuredly, could he have chosen words more expressly and clearly stating his admission than those he has used? "*Though there be errors of number, genealogies, etc., of writing in the Scripture as written or printed.*" It is "a great concession," but it is a *concession* made in a straight and honest manner; and a "concession" which he naturally defends from the inferences his opponents would draw from it, such as that the Scripture did not secure the Church from an invincible ignorance in matters of faith.

NOTE C.

Dr. John Owen says: "I must say that although a man be furnished with external arguments of all sorts covering the Divine original and authority of the Scriptures, although we esteem his motives of credibility to be effectually persuasive, and have the authority

of any or all the Churches in the world to confirm his persuasion, yet if he have no experience in himself of its Divine power, authority, and efficacy, he neither doth nor can believe it to be the Word of God in a due manner—with faith Divine and supernatural. But he that hath this experience hath that testimony in himself which will never fail." (*Works*, Vol. IV., p. 94.)

In conclusion, then, it seems to me that the Puritan faith finds clear expression in the judgment of these men, Baxter, Rutherford, and Owen, and that—

(1) They emphasized the complete authority and sufficiency of the Bible in everything relating to the redemption and regeneration of man.

(2) They asserted that the sense or soul of Scripture was unaffected by the imperfections of the earthen vessel in which it was contained.

(3) They did not play into the hands of the enemy by denying these imperfections, or hamper the minds of the inquiring young by putting the acceptance of an absolutely inerrant Bible in the way of their approach to *Him* who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

(4) For to them the superlative witness to the Divinity of the Bible was the new life it mediated, enriched and perfected for the souls of men.

NOTE D.

Rev. Professor Sayce says: "I can only say that, as far as I know anything about the results of Oriental archaeology, they emphatically contradict the doctrine of the absolute inerrancy of Scripture. The Assyrian inscriptions, for example, have shown that the chronology of the Book of Kings is hopelessly wrong, and that, while the compiler of the books has quoted honestly and fully from older, and, for the most part, contemporaneous documents, the imperfection of his materials has caused him to fall into precisely the same errors as a modern historian would be likely to fall into under similar circumstances."

"The doctrine of verbal Inspiration is, in fact, a modern doctrine which has been substituted for the ancient Catholic doctrine of Canonicity. It receives no countenance from the Articles of the Anglican Church, which lay down that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation," and go on to define Holy Scripture in the old way as "those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." (*Christian Commonwealth*, September 28th, 1893.)

V.

THE THREE DEFENCES OF AN INERRANT BIBLE.

BUT it is alleged that whatever may be the *facts* of the situation, there are three reasons of such overwhelming strength in favour of an absolutely inerrant Bible, that it is easily demonstrable there must be some fatal flaw, either in the evidence on which the statement that there are “errors” in the Bible rests, or else in the use made of that evidence. Of these three—

- The first, is the theory of an “autograph Bible.”
- The second, is the witness of the Bible to itself.
- The third, is the inherent necessity of the Christian Faith.

I. Allowing that there are actual “errors” in the existing texts of the prophecies of Jeremiah or the letters of Paul, it is declared that if we had access to the original copies of the writings, say of Jeremiah or Paul, the Chronicles or Psalms, Luke or Matthew, we should forthwith be face to face with a Bible free from all admixture of error. Questions of authorship and date, long in dispute, would be at once satisfactorily settled. Calvin’s doubt as to the writer of the Second

Epistle of Peter would disappear ; Luther's enquiries concerning the Hebrews would be answered ; the share of Moses and Ezra in the Pentateuch would be as easily marked as the share of Watts or Whittier in our hymn-book ; indeed, each Psalm would appear with name of author and date of production affixed as in our modern Psalmody, and the work of different authors and editors could be printed in different colours as in one of our recent editions of the Hebrew Scriptures. At last the Synoptical Gospels would tally. We should have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus Christ. It would be made clear to us whether the Great Teacher uniformly spoke of the Kingdom of *Heaven*, as Matthew reports, or of the Kingdom of *God*, according to Luke, or of both, and with what frequency in each case. So the centre of interest shifts from the documents in our hands to what is called by those who use this defence, that "autograph Bible," which is as free from "error" as the character of God is from stain.

(1) Now, first of all, it must be recognised that this supposition of autograph copies of the books of the Bible lifts us at once out of the realm of facts into the insecure and airy world of theory. We have no autograph documents of the Bible, not one ; not even a page of one. Ruskin, in one of his Oxford lectures, held up a page of a letter on which the eye and hand of King Alfred had rested. What a delight to us to gaze on the report of Stephen's speech, exactly as Luke left it, or to see the original from which he copied his account of the Sermon on the Mount, or to investigate

the "notes" from which Matthew compiled his setting of "the great speeches" of the Son of Man, or to see for ourselves in what "large characters" Paul gave the autographic proof of his love for the Galatians! But the originals have not yet been found, and it is hardly too much to say that we have not a shadow of hope of ever obtaining them. We cannot examine them any more than we can investigate the structure of the original cave man. Stephen's speech may have been as correct as it was passionate and instructive, but though we can feel the throb of its passion, and rejoice in its philosophy of history, it is not likely we shall ever know whether he *said* "Abraham" or "Jacob" entered into the bargain for land with the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

(2) Besides, the advocates of this theory must reckon with the admitted fact, that the investigation of manuscripts, though only in its infancy, has up to the present vindicated the integrity of the reading of Stephen's speech as it is rendered in our version, and not given the slightest ray of light as to the discrepancy between Matthew and Luke's representations of the Sermon on the Mount, or suggested any emendations to the Sixteenth Chapter of the First Book of Chronicles, or brought out any reconciliation of Deuteronomy and Joshua and Judges. Indeed it is one of the defences of our existing Bible that the more the manuscripts are examined and collated and sifted, the more our existing Bible is confirmed in its statements; so that, so far, we have no reason whatever to believe that if we obtained the autograph copies of Luke and

Matthew those originals would not contain the statements admittedly present in the Bible we now use.

(3) This "autograph" theory is, in short, only a variation of the pedantry of the Purists of the Seventeenth Century, who maintained that the Greek of the New Testament must be of classic purity and strength, for the obvious reason that the Holy Ghost could not be guilty of a solecism, or a barbarism, or, indeed, of the slightest violation of grammar. Chrysostom, who knew that our "faith" does not rest on accuracies of speech and precision of terms, says that Paul employs the word "allegory" in an improper sense in Galatians iv., c. 24; and Calvin quotes his witness, and adds "*quod verissimum est.*" Nor will it be questioned that the authority of the Bible has not been in any measure contingent upon the possession of these autograph and inerrant copies. The victories of the Word of God have been won with the *present Bible*. To Luther it seemed more errant than it does to us, and yet it was for him the sword of the Spirit; and, with unfaltering confidence, he said in the presence of gigantic difficulties, "The sword of the Lord. It will do it, it will do it." Calvin and Rutherford, Owen and Baxter, are only examples of the men, the true and great men, in whom the Revelation of God has succeeded, the men of the true and normal order, made mighty for God and against evil through the Word. Why, then, fall into the paltry literalism of the Purists, or the hard and blinding Rabbinism of the Pharisees, idolize the letter of Scripture, and put burdens on men that neither they

nor we are able to bear? We seriously imperil the authority and limit the service of Scripture every time we advocate its absolute inerrancy.

(4) For it is obvious that if it had been best for us, God would have built up a Bible with every letter clearly formed, every clause distinctly punctuated, and every literary feature perfect*; and having formed this faultless edifice He would have protected it from the destructive storms of time, and secured it to each one of us as an indefeasible possession. He could have done it; and had our "salvation," or our spiritual strength and grace depended upon it, He would most surely have done so. He has not. Nay, more! Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, has not Himself written us a line. Once He stooped and wrote on the ground with

* Speaking of Romans ix., 5, Prof. Bruce says: "Here it may be observed in passing we have an instance how much may depend on punctuation, and what a serious defect from the point of view of a mechanical theory of Inspiration is the absence of punctuation from the autograph text. In connection with so important a subject as the Person of Christ, it would certainly have been a great advantage to have had from the Apostle's own hand a carefully punctuated text. Had this existed, and had it been found to contain a sign of the value of a comma after *σάρκα*, it would have left little room for doubt that St. Paul meant to speak of Christ as God over all. As the case stands we are left to determine this question whether this was indeed his intention by other considerations, and at most we can arrive only at a probable conclusion on either side of the question." *Expositor*, Fourth Series, Vol. X., 43-4. That comma would have saved reams of literature on a passage which Prof. Ezra Abbot says has been punctuated and interpreted in seven different ways. The absence of a punctuated Bible is fatal to the plea for verbal Inspiration.

His finger as a pen; but it was to rebuke men who, whilst worshipping the Book of the Law, were violating its obvious teaching and contradicting its spirit. But for His followers He did not write out one command or pen a single message. That silence is an argument. God has not given us an autograph Bible; for it is not necessary to "make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ," nor to "furnish them completely unto all good works," and yet He "has provided *all things* that pertain unto life and *godliness*." The "autograph Bible" theory is as unwarranted as it is useless, and as mischievous as it is unwarranted.

II. The final authority in this, as in all religious controversy for us, is Jesus Christ. He is the Infallible Judge. His words are an end to strife. He appeals to the Scriptures: uses them as his weapons of defence and His sword of attack; rebukes the teachers of His time for their false uses of their beloved books, declares that their contents cannot be broken, and that their revelations shall not go unfulfilled.

Most writers are agreed as to the conclusive authority of the witness of our Lord to the Old Testament Scriptures: but differences exist as to the exact meaning of His words concerning these Scriptures, and the character and compass of the inferences, the terms He employs, guarantee. These are some of the chief points yet in dispute.

A similar difference obtains as to the force of the words used by the New Testament writers concerning

the elder Scriptures, and as to the claims the writers make for themselves and for their own productions.

(A) Assuming that we are at one as to the *fact* of the plenary authority of our Lord, and follow what He teaches with the utmost loyalty: that, as Canon Gore says: "He is the summary Authority in religion;" then, what we have to discover, is the true and exact interpretation of His sayings about the Old Testament.

(1) A palmary passage cited in this controversy is Matthew v., 17, 18: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished." Could anything, it is asked, more picturesquely and thoroughly declare the inerrancy of Scripture? "Not even a letter," not so much as "a fraction of a letter" can fail. If that assertion of the inviolability of the jots and tittles of the law and of the prophets does not completely shut out error of any and every kind, then by what language could it be done?

(a) But, first, it is obvious from the discourse in which we find this saying, and of which it may be regarded as the *text*, that Jesus distinctly, and with repeated emphasis, sets His authority and teaching against, and over, that of the legislative records of the Old Testament. "It was said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you," is a formula embedded

in the structure of the Sermon on the Mount and inseparable from it for ever (Matthew v., 21, 27, 33, 43).

(b) Nor will it be questioned that in the exercise of that authority, Jesus abrogates the law of retaliation, stated in the words, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth;" so that a true interpretation of the words concerning "the accomplishment of the law" must provide room, and abundant room, too, for the total abolition of certain elements of the Pentateuchal legislation, as being imperfect and transitory, and to "be done away in Christ."

(c) From other parts of the teaching of the Saviour it is patent that He also invalidates the entire mass of the Old Testament directions respecting defilement through external influences and physical conditions (Mark vii., 15, 23), and therefore strong as Christ's words concerning the fulfilment of the law and the prophets are, they cannot mean that He is declaring the indefeasible authority of the regulations concerning ceremonial corruption; regulations which, instead of being mere "jots and tittles," occupy a large and controlling place in the Hebrew economy.

(d) Does not the same Teacher also expressly repudiate for Himself and His disciples all subjection to the Sabbath ordinance enacted in the Old Testament, and enforced with such awful sanctions? And does He not assert His personal and exclusive Lordship over the Sabbath, and deliver His followers forthwith and for ever from the whole ceremonial and external legislation of Mosaism? (Mark ii., 23, 28).

We must, therefore, conclude that Jesus is not speaking of the historical details of the Old

Testament, nor of the particular ceremonial and ethical directions that crowd the Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy ; but of the “ law and prophets ” as containing, notwithstanding the presence of imperfect and transitory elements, the Revelation of the Will of God for man, a Divine programme of the ideal life, a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Son of God, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. His contemporaries, the masters of religion and of debate, thought He had come in order to destroy the real religion of the Old Testament ; and they said so. They represented Him as a revolutionary, an anarchist in religion, and they persecuted and crucified Him on that false interpretation of His position and work. Therefore, with touching pathos, Jesus says to His disciples, “ Do not think of Me in that way. I am not come to destroy, but to fill out the Divine programme of salvation to Israel and the world, sketched in the law and the prophets, and not so much as a line of it, or a fragment of a line of it, shall go unfulfilled. I shall exhibit it in its completeness, and bring the Divine ideal into the actual experience of the sons of men.”

It is, therefore, a grave mistake to cite this passage as though it were in favour of “ verbal Inspiration ” or the “ absolute inerrancy ” of the Scriptures. It does not refer to the *letter* of Scripture at all, save in a figure, and the context, together with the general teachings of Jesus, warrants the conclusion that it is *against* such a theory, and proves that it is a wrong done to the Saviour’s words, to quote them as though they had anything whatever to do with such questions as the universality of the deluge recorded in

Genesis, the vindication of stoning for breaking the Sabbath law, or the account of the death of Achan and his family, and the destruction of all that he had, described in the Book of Joshua.

(2) A second passage freely and frequently cited is the saying of Christ, in John x., 35 : "The Scripture cannot be broken." Godet says: "The Old Testament is, in its deepest tendency, ever advancing towards the incarnation, the climax of the increasing approximation between God and man. It is on this that our Lord's argument is really based: if there is nothing blasphemous in the whole current, the end to which it is flowing, the appearance of a man who declares Himself *one with God* has nothing in itself derogatory to the sovereignty of God." The thread of that argument is easily seized. Jesus is charged with blasphemy by the Jews, whose one supreme court of appeal was the Scriptures; therefore Christ meets them in their own court, and says: "If the Scriptures describe as 'gods' the men who received the Revelation of God, why should not I, who, through the same Divine Revelation, realized the most perfect fellowship with the Father, indicate that fact by the use of similar language?" He is vindicating Himself from the attacks of His foes, and He appeals directly to the Scriptures in which they trusted, reminding them they cannot play fast and loose with its teachings, but must accept its verdicts when they are against them as well as when they are for them. For "the Scripture cannot be broken" or destroyed. The truth of God endures to all generations.

Now, although here, as in several other instances, Christ is speaking of *words*, yet He clearly lifts the stress from the particular terms and incidents and lets it fall on the principle which underlies them. Of course, we must know the exact words and the exact meaning of the words of the Bible; but we must never forget that words are but the vehicles of ideas, and "that the strength of the Bible teaching is, that it does not rest on isolated texts, but on broad streams of truth which run through the whole Book, broadening and deepening as they go."

In all these cases in which "Christ founds an argument upon a single word," it is provable (*a*) that the appeal is not so much to the terms themselves as to the principles which they express; and (*b*) that the principles are those which are central to the life of faith, and to the world-redeeming purpose of Divine Revelation. Hence it is unwarrantable to attempt to make such passages carry a doctrine of "verbal Inspiration" or the "absolute accuracy" of every historical detail, scientific allusion, and ethical direction contained within the Scriptures.

(3) Nor is that a satisfactory exegesis which substitutes the word "Bible" for the word "truth," in "Sanctify them in the truth," and treats the following clause, "Thy word is truth," as an intentional reference to the "jots and tittles" of all the books of the Old Testament, and equivalent to an assertion of the historicity of the story of Lot's wife, or of the sojourn of Jonah in the belly of the whale. I am not pronouncing any judgment on these portions

of Scripture, further than to say that it does not seem to me fair reasoning to convert an incidental allusion, given solely for purposes of illustration, into a guarantee of historical reality, or to take a term from the lips of Jesus Christ and apply it as a label to the whole of the Old Testament, and then say, "Christ and these particulars must stand or fall together."

Equally illogical is it to interpret the words "Moses wrote of Me" as declaring that the Pentateuch is, in every line of it, due to his pen. If the evidences contained within the books themselves justify the conclusion that we have several documents of differing ages, written by different persons, the saying, " Moses wrote of Me," considering the usage of the time, ought not to create any difficulty in the way of accepting such evidence.

Hence a true and full explanation of the words of Jesus concerning the Old Testament will prove that He ascribes Divine authority to "the written Word ;" that He speaks of Moses and the prophets as the media of the Revelation of the Divine Will ; that He regarded the primary function of the older Scripture as fulfilled in Israel ; that He recognized the different values of the contents of the Scriptures ; that He recovers the lost idea of a suffering Messiah ; that He claimed to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies, and to be the substance and goal of Revelation ; but these words cannot be made to carry an inference that the Bible is free from what in other literature would be called historical inaccuracies and ethical imperfections. If, therefore, a theory of "verbal Inspiration" can be proved at all, it must be from sources outside the teaching and example of our Lord.

(4) For nowhere does He say a word which, fairly and fully interpreted, suggests the absolute inerrancy of the Old Testament, and by His use of the translation of the Hebrew, known as the Septuagint, a text notoriously corrupt, warns us against relying on terms as though they were truths, and treating the vehicle of Revelation as if it were the Revelation itself. The thought of Jesus concerning the Old Testament could not find more complete expression than in the words, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness ; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

(B) Driven from the witness of Jesus as unavailing, refuge is taken in the testimony of His Apostles as explicit, abundant, and conclusive. Jesus promised them the special gift of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament writers occupy a unique position with regard to Revelation, and by fair implication, their writings hold similar rank as a record of apostolic teaching ; and therefore we may appeal to them with unhesitating confidence. I heartily endorse that representation of the apostolic position and the appeal based upon it, and am ready to abide by the apostolic verdict, fairly and justly interpreted.

(1) The first witness quoted from the Apostles is the saying of Paul, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God ;" and immediately the conclusion is reached that the "Word of God" is the *whole* Bible, and that faith in the accuracy of everything in it is necessary to salvation ; as though Paul

had said "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by Solomon's Song and the Book of Esther." But does not this reasoning vanish like vapour in the heat of a July sun when you read in the Revised Version, as indeed you must read, if you are to follow the best authorities as to the original text, "the Word of Christ" instead of "the Word of God?" Demonstrably Paul is not referring to *written* Scripture at all and as such; but to the Word or Revelation of salvation in Christ Jesus, and therein once more telling us, what is apparent throughout the record of Inspiration, that the real core of Revelation is not a body of words, or even of ideas, but the redeeming power of the personal Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Still more emphasis is given to the witness of Peter concerning prophecy, in which he tells us that "prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and it is pleaded that the "Holy Ghost moved" them because they were men liable to error, apt to misunderstand things, and the Holy Ghost was given in order that error might be rendered impossible.

(a) Now, in so far as the Bible is a Revelation of God and of man, of the way of life, and of the Christian faith and service, it is absolutely inerrant; but Inspiration is not always Revelation. It is a movement of God within the soul. It is essentially subjective; it is human, and it is perfectly consistent with *all we know of God's action everywhere else, and with all the facts contained within the Bible*, that men moved by the Holy Ghost, men like Paul and Barnabas, should

not be error-proof, *save* as to the specific object for which a Revelation is given them, but left free to reflect the historical and scientific and literary beliefs of their time. For the Bible is more than a Revelation. It is a collection of fragments, of quotations, of comments upon quotations, of oracles, of private and public letters, of genealogies and laws, written by men, and in parts edited and re-edited by men, and it is not fair to contend that Peter's statement includes every line within the Testaments, and is applicable to each part in the same sense; it is more true, and therefore more wise, to say with the late Professor Elmslie: "Hebrew history is manifestly history written with a purpose. It was never intended that it should be taken as an exact reporter's chronicle of external things that happen. The real interest of the writers is something different; it is to get down below the surface, in behind the scenes, to come upon the great hands of God fashioning this world's story."

(b) Moreover, the history of the Canon of the Old and New Testaments ought to suggest a doubt as to the legitimacy of a process which applies the phrase "the Word of God" to, and claims "verbal Inspiration" for, the contents of the collection of sacred writings which the Churches have adopted, not without much dispute and considerable differences of judgment. No one claims that the Churches are faultless, and yet they have created the "Bible," considered as a grouping of the literature of a theocratic and God-inspired people; they have settled what shall, and what shall not be, in this Divine Library. Is there no "breath of God" in Ecclesiasticus? Are not the books of the Maccabees

profitable for instruction in righteousness? Is it surprising that Esther was excluded from the Bible by Melito of Sardis, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzen? Was the New Testament in existence as a whole and *as we have it*, before the middle of the Second Century? Surely these and similar considerations ought to make us pause before we take the sayings of Paul about his own Inspiration, and of Peter about the Inspiration of the prophets, and use them as if they had in their minds at the time every chapter and verse of either the Protestant or the Roman Catholic Bible. No! This yoke of literalism cannot be put upon us in the name of the Apostles.

(C) It is perhaps necessary to refer for a moment to a passage in the Psalms cited in support of an inerrant Book. The words, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul," are actually quoted as descriptive of the entire Bible, and as proof of its freedom from all human imperfection. Can anyone believe that the singer of that Psalm was describing the Book of Judges, or characterizing the saying, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," or proclaiming the complete adequacy for all the needs of man of the conception of God contained in the Book of Ecclesiastes? Is not the word "law" employed to describe the instruction and teaching, the guidance and restoring grace God had given to Israel, His chosen and inspired people? Unquestionably it is not more, as it is not less, than an assertion that the manifestation of God as Saviour and Redeemer was perfect, for the purpose named, viz., the restoring of the soul to Himself.

But it is confessed that Jesus did “set aside the law” of the Lord, apparently without the slightest recognition of the fact that if the argument concerning the perfection of the whole law, in every word and tittle of it, had been valid, no abolition would have been necessary.

III. But the most radical and operative argument is, the necessity of the doctrine of the total inerrancy of the Bible as a dogmatic safeguard, as an indispensable postulate, if we are to have “a reliable Bible,” an impregnable defence of the whole Christian faith. For, it is asked, if the Bible be errant in any fragment of its history, in any item of its reporting, or in any of its allusions to natural phenomena, what then becomes of its authority on matters of “faith, of personal peace, progress, and the life everlasting?” How can we be sure that it is true about anything, if it is not true on all? Scripture is the criterion of religious doctrine, and if the criterion is at fault, then who can find the truth? In fact, the stronghold of “inerrancy” is not the Bible itself, but the discomfort begotten of accepting a Book as a criterion of doctrine and guide of life which is not without spot or blemish or any such thing. If Stephen made a mistake about a name, may not Paul have made one when he said: “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?” To say that the Bible is plenarily authoritative on all that relates to the Revelation of redemption in Christ Jesus or to His Church and Kingdom does not suffice. To say that the Scriptures are infallible for

the purpose for which they are given does not matter. If the Bible is not reliable in every jot and tittle, it is not reliable at all. It is a bewildering statement ; and yet it is the one affirmation that is repeated by the believers in "verbal Inspiration" without pause, and received without hesitation.

(1) But as to the *difficulty* which the presence of error in the Bible creates, it ought to be sufficient to remember that our life is not administered by God on the principles of the greatest ease and the least effort. Therefore it is no more proof that the Bible is not of God, and not authoritative in the spiritual realm because it has historical inaccuracies within it, than life itself is proved to be not of God because it is full of labour, and nature demonstrated to exist without Him because it is everywhere struggling through imperfection to perfection. The difficulty does not relate to the forgiveness and conquest of sin, the pathway to holiness, the life of service, and the rest and joy of the soul in God. Everybody knows the early Christians received the Word concerning Christ on the simple testimony of the preachers of the Cross, found it verified in their experience, and then rejoiced in full assurance of faith and understanding. To nine out of ten of the Christians of the First Century the Old Testament was of little or no value : and the tenth used it chiefly so that he might see the way in which the Jesus, in whom he already trusted, was the fulfilment of the word of the prophets. And in this respect the later Christians are much like the earlier ones. The real

difficulties relate to the literary and historical qualities of the contents of the Bible; and the student must remember that here, as elsewhere, the way is narrow and the gate strait, and only those who strive, enter in and possess the truth.

(2) Besides, it is a gross mistake to suppose that the doctrine of inerrancy is a doctrinal safeguard. Indeed, it is the opposite. It imperils the authority of Scripture to insist on the historical accuracy and ethical perfectness of all the contents of all the books of the Bible. It creates a prejudice against Inspiration, and against the Revelation of life which it supplies. There is no denying that it is one of the most serious hindrances to men in their search for Christ. It is painful to think that men who reason on this subject are ignorant of the real attitude towards the Bible, and the keen suffering of sincere and earnest men in their efforts to obtain a restful faith in the Scriptures. Accuracy is now a passion. Science has taught us to face facts at all costs. The medical student is in search of the exact fact all the week. The chemist wants to know what really is and what is not. Science teachers tell their pupils "that accuracy and thoroughness in observation are qualities which of all others are the most essential." The modern conscience is exactingly scrupulous as to fact. It abhors a seeming subterfuge; it is offended by anything that looks like shuffling. It prefers understatement to overstatement, and feels that it is the safer course. Dogmas that go beyond the sources of theology imperil the dogmas that are truly based thereon. Identifying a theory of our

own framing with the Revelation of God, and asserting that the two stand or fall together is, therefore, one of the surest ways of frustrating the redeeming purpose for which the Revelation of the Christ is given.*

It is not too much to hope that this passion for truth will develop (*a*) a stronger devotion to the exact fact in the treatment of the Bible ; (*b*) a disuse of the unhappy, inadequate, and misleading words, "verbal Inspiration;" (*c*) a keener sympathy with those to whom the literary and historical aspects of the Bible bring difficulty and pain ; (*d*) a belief that the men who cannot accept the theory of an inerrant Bible are not incessantly talking about the "errors" of the Bible, but are strenuously asserting its plenary authority, persuading men to accept and obey its teachings, and only discuss "the errors" of the Bible as a practising doctor does specific diseases, *i.e.*, when they are brought under their notice in individual cases ; and (*e*) above all, a deeper sense of the need of the teaching of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.

* *The Bible in Germany*.—Paul Göhre, in accounting for the widespread alienation of the German workpeople from the churches, and for their despisal of the clergy and of institutional religion as a whole, cites as one powerful cause the common practice of teaching the children the inerrancy of the Scriptures. He says: "This authority of the Bible is binding to them, not merely in the old idea of Inspiration wherever the Scriptures 'declare Christ Jesus,' but equally binding and equally infallible in its secular teachings down to the very last iota. I saw that they looked to the Bible, not merely for an answer to the question, 'How shall a man find peace of heart?' but to every imaginable perplexity — intellectual or scientific. Indeed, I might almost say it was for this latter purpose that they chiefly used the Scriptures, whose value in answering the other question was almost unknown to them."—*Three Months in a Workshop*, pp. 147, 148.

VI.

IF THERE ARE “ERRORS” IN THE BIBLE, THEN WHAT AND WHERE IS ITS AUTHORITY?

THE next questions for consideration are (1) If there be no longer any question as to the existence of “errors” in the Bible what becomes of its *Authority*? Is it real and operative, or is it a mere will-o’-the-wisp? (2) If the authority of the Bible is not in the *whole* of it, in what part is it concealed, and how may we find it? If it is not in the *words* themselves, since Scripture is made up of words, where else is it?

I. As to the first of these questions, it is notorious that absolute inerrancy is so far from being necessary to the exercise of authority, that there is one instance, and only one, where authority and inerrancy go together. Authorities are many: but God alone is perfect. Greater leader than Moses men never followed, yet he spake unadvisedly with his lips and lost the Promised Land by his faults; but not only in his own time, but to this day, his departed, but sceptred spirit, still rules men. Greece swayed the best thought of the world in life, philosophy and art; but its limitations, confusions and mistakes are as

notorious as its power. The wand of the City of the Seven Hills stretched over the habitable globe, and the faults and errors of Roman rule are our beacons to this hour. All Churches have authority ; is there one that is without defect and sin ? Is it not the exigent childishness of the Papists that has compelled them, in the face of the increasing decay of the Pope's authority, to assert his infallibility ? Till masters in their businesses, and parents in their families, cease to exercise their authority over their servants and children, because they themselves are not immaculate, it is the veriest crudity of thought for us to imagine that we must have an errorless Bible before we can be made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

II. To answer the second question, we must carefully analyse the *fact* of authority. What is the experience covered by that word ? What do we mean when we speak of the authority of a man, a State, a book ? Clearly that which in some way or other compels, or has the right and power to compel, obedience to the law it enacts. The most familiar experience is the authority of a master to coerce obedience to his regulations by the withdrawal of wages, the imposition of a fine, or the infliction of some penalty. The authority of the father in his home is, in the last resource, to compel the obedience of his children to the rules of his household. We talk of the authority of the State, and mean its right and ability to punish those who steal, or slander, or refuse to pay taxes. That State authority may

annex itself to religious institutions, and claim to be a "religious authority," as when it compelled a magistrate to partake of the Lord's Supper as a condition of filling the magisterial office, or a clergyman to give assent and consent to the Book of Common Prayer as a condition of discharging his duties as a parish priest. The essence of the idea and fact of authority in these common experiences is the right and power to coerce or compel action.

But this is not necessarily the coercion of mind. Outward acts may be compelled by the authority of a master or a State; but we seek the authority that coerces mind, that has the right and the power to compel belief and trust, and through belief and trust to inspire and shape action.

Why, then, let us ask, do I believe in the teachings of Sciences such as chemistry or geology? Clearly because these Sciences embrace facts which I can inspect and test for myself, set in the order of their sequence, of which I can trace the causation and governing law, and so be compelled to certain beliefs. I wish to know whether fire burns, or a wall resists, or oxygen supports life; the fire burns my finger, and I believe; the wall repels a blow, and again I believe; oxygen quickens the pulse, and once more I believe. It is the *truth* of the Sciences that forms their right and power to compel belief.

Again, why do I believe that the constituent elements of the planets and stars and suns are the same as those of the earth on which we live? I cannot go far in personal investigation of the stellar worlds, I am unable to come within the sweep of the facts

themselves in their entire range of evidence ; but trained men of Science report the results of their experiments, and as I read or hear them, I am compelled by the scientific character of a Kirchoff or a Lockyer to accept the conclusions of these authoritative witnesses on stellar chemistry. In this case my belief is due to the authoritative or belief-coercing power of scientific men.

Once more. I find in me a belief in the persistence of force, the reign of law, the existence of a luminiferous ether, the process called evolution, and similar truths, and yet I cannot demonstrate them, and, in a real sense, they can scarcely be said to be demonstrable beyond all chance of doubt. Whence, then, comes this faith ? I trace it to the common scientific consciousness, due in part to specific experiment and repeated verification of particular facts, in part to the organic unity of all scientific knowledge, and in part to those intuitions or necessary truths which are the base-rock of all our reasoning. Thus, in these three typical experiences the right and power to compel belief is—

- (1) In the truth itself;
 - (2) In the witness of true and trained men on subjects of which they are masters ;
 - (3) In the common consciousness of those sections of mankind specially experienced in the truths believed.
-
- (1) Now the authority of the Bible is certainly not less than the authority of Science, and it is provable, and may be asserted, that it compels belief by its

intrinsic truth. Dr. Martineau has expressed a common experience when he says authority "means that we are spoken to by another and a higher in such a way as to strike home and wake echoes in ourselves, and so the speech is instantly transferred from external attestation to self-evidence." We have the witness within ourselves. We know the truth, and know it from the Bible. It is the objective norm of our faith: and the truth makes us free from error and fear, from disbelief and self-will, and constrains us to loving obedience. From this inspired Volume we obtain accurate conceptions concerning God, the Source of all law, the Giver of life and light, the Father and Redeemer, the Ruler and Judge of men; concerning man, and God's ideal of him, an ideal of perfect holiness, unending progress and full blessedness; and concerning sin, its misery and meaning, and the way God is dealing with it in Christ Jesus for its final destruction. These central truths we owe—not to reason, for reason is not a source of knowledge, but the instrument for its apprehension; not to the Churches, for they have received them once for all, and are the agents for their distribution; but to those holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and they so "strike home," and are so in keeping with the needs and constitution of our nature, that we are ready to give them the most unrestrained obedience, and to declare that nothing shall stand between us and the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. It is the fountain of accurate knowledge on the truths of the spiritual order, and its authority is as final as it is cogent, and

as certain as it is complete. It is the spiritual and saving truth of the Bible which compels credence and gives it its matchless power over the lives of men. The authority of the Bible, like the authority of chemistry, is in intrinsic truth.

So we have travelled back to the Protestant principle of our ancestors. They held that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the source of accurate knowledge on the religious life. No priest was needed. No Church was requisite. Only let the soul and truth meet together, and they will know each other. The truth will be self-evidencing and the spirit of man will be content. That theory started before the doctrine of an inerrant Bible was preached, and it holds now it is denied. Luther upheld it, and yet did not fail to talk in a depreciating tone of James and Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation ; and whatever theory of Inspiration you adopt, or view of the errancy or inerrancy of Scripture you follow, the theory is true. Yea, it is the only absolutely true element in any conception of the authority of the Bible.

But the accurate reading of the Word of God shows that Jesus is its centre and goal, its life and light, its all and in all. It gives us truth, as truth is in Jesus. Its superlative worth is in the Revelation ; and He is the Revelation and the Revealer. The Christ Idea, the idea of God becoming incarnate to redeem, is the substance of Revelation. Jesus is the truth, and, therefore, the authority of the Bible is the authority of Jesus. It is He who compels belief in the Fatherhood of God, in His patient work for men, His

self-sacrifice, His long-suffering, His righteousness, and His victory. He has made God thinkable and lovable, in spite of the pitilessness of nature and the pathos of life. He has given hope to men in spite of the tyranny of circumstance and the corruption of sin.

"Iniquities prevail against us:

As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away."

So the authority is personal rather than literary, concrete rather than abstract, of the heart and mind rather than of the printed page. Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" reveals the face of the Saviour full of beauty, but more suggestive of power working beneficently and serenely, of kindness blended with irresistible authority. To see Christ, really to see Him, is to say "Master and Lord," to accept His Word as final, His example as authoritative, and His rule as supreme and unique. He penetrates the entire man, and forces him to say, "I must be and do what He would do and be were He here now,"

"Because amid the wintry vast
 Of worlds, the voiceless gloom of space,
I pine for love, and learn at last
 That nowhere beams so calm a face,
With eyes so filled with love as true,
 As deep, as tender, Lord, as Thine,
I kneel before Thy Cross anew
 And hold Thy manhood all Divine."*

Yes, says the troubled spirit battling with the currents of criticism; but your "Biblical errors" pursue me even into this sacred enclosure, and I am forced to ask, "Do not the New Testament writers vary in the conception they present of Christ, and is

* G. F. Savage-Armstrong in *One in the Infinite*.

not the image of the real Jesus so confused in the Gospels that its outlines are lost and its features cannot be traced with accuracy?" The practical sense of mankind makes answer from the centuries, and attests that the Christ of Galilee and Jerusalem—whilst, owing to His marvellous fulness, presenting a new aspect to every new age and to every new school of thought, has been in His evangelical essence, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Added to that is the response of criticism. For certainly the mind and character of Christ have been brought home to us in these later years with such a charm of reality by a succession of students, that never was He seen more "in His habit as He lived" since the days of Paul; never did His ideas shine with brighter radiance on the path of perplexed men, and never was His spirit of pity and justice, of grace and righteousness, more pervasively felt. If the authority of the truth of the Bible is in the keeping of the Jesus who dwells therein, then never was authority more absolutely secure. The errancy of Scripture neither touches Him nor His work.

(2) The investigation of the forces that compel belief in, and subjection to, the authority of the Bible, brings us face to face with a succession of authoritative men who have set forth the truths of Scripture in the splendour of their life, and represented the power of Christ over their wills and in their service. Jesus was the first Christian, and is the most convincing witness to Himself; but He is also the Creator and Leader of a glorious company of apostles

and prophets, missionaries and evangelists, who receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon them to be His witnesses.* He spake with authority, for He knew at first hand, as one coming from the spiritual realm and able to testify to its contents and laws, conditions and powers; but He also lifted up into the "heavenlies" men and women who, having experienced His truth and power, were themselves enriched with a holiness that compels reverence, a heroism that inspires admiration, and a goodness that reveals love. That succession of redeemed and regenerate souls, speaking with the accent of conviction, and working with great reproductive energy, have maintained the Christian race from age to age. Paul and Peter, John and James, give Biblical truth the opportunity to exercise its authority, by the representations they give of Jesus and His works in the writings they contribute to the newer portion of the Word of God.

(3) This, however, is only a portion of the faith-creating force that comes from that supernatural order to which they belong, from that common Christian consciousness in which they share, and by which the use, as well as the authority of Scripture, is greatly advanced. It has often been felt that the authority of truth over the individual, and the influence of the great leaders in the Christian faith, although unspeakably momentous elements in the authority of Scripture, yet do not cover the whole of the facts in the case. Therefore it has been sought to add the

* Acts i., 8. John xiv., 25, 26; xvi., 12, 13.

authority of "the Church" or of tradition. But this is chiefly an endeavour to represent the fact that there is an unquestionable authority in the verdicts, concerning the Bible, of the general Christian community, scattered throughout the world and continuous throughout the ages, and expressed in what may be called the common Christian consciousness. For to give up the Bible to any Church, Roman or Anglican, is to surrender the only ideal by which the Churches can be judged. You lose your standard, and you find it more and more difficult to believe in your Bible if you accept any one Church—Greek or Latin or English—as the judge of Scripture; and the older the Church the more likely is it to be devoid of the breath of that Spirit who inspires the Word.* But the element of truth at the heart of this appeal to the Church is the fact that the general experience of Christian men comes in to confirm the individual faith, to correct its errors, enlarge its narrowness, and broaden its Catholicity; so these Biblical writings are not only themselves part of that great spiritual order which has appeared in the world, and still appears, but they are perpetually receiving the witness to their truth and power borne by the experience of "the holy Church throughout the world," and thereby they hold supreme sway in the best life of mankind.†

* "It is misleading to say that Bible and Church are the channels of Christ's authority, just as it would be misleading to say the Bible and mothers."—*Critical Review*, II., 122.

† "The great consents as to the right way of thinking on some central questions, recorded in the history of the Church, have

The Bible was, and is, then, the ultimate arbiter of religious faith and practice, an authoritative and completely trustworthy Revelation of religious knowledge and duty and destiny, a safe and sure guide to God and salvation. Critical investigation and critical results leave the facts and ideas of Revelation untouched and their authority undiminished. They are concerned with the form, the course, the vehicle of Revelation, and do not affect its living substance and unique power. If you have the Bible and read its truth as truth is in Jesus, you not only have truth, but certitude and authority. The grass withers, theories of Inspiration change, views of the composition of the books of the Testaments alter, mistakes as to chronology, history, numbers and morals are undeniable, but the Word of the Lord is there, and it endures for ever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

But the crowning certainty is secured through these forces by the Work of God in the spirit of man. This is, as we say in a phrase of profound significance, the dispensation of the "Spirit of Truth." God Himself is man's actual Teacher. He rules and directs your life and mine to bring us to the *Truth*; broods over it, and nourishes it that it may be a true permanent interest and claim high regard. But this is not authoritative in the strict and proper sense. This is not an embodiment of Christ's authority. It is the embodiment of the thinking of those who are subject to His authority."—*Critical Review*, II., 122. Dr. Hatch says: "The common sense of average mankind is, where fairly informed, the ultimate solvent of all critical and speculative theories whatever."

life through and through and for evermore. The whole energy of God goes out for the intellectual and moral regeneration of the world. He administers for this, and subdues all things to the exciting, awaking, and educating of men. As the sun is the fruitful source of all vegetable growth, so God is the universal mind-food, mind-stimulant, the "energy" of all true intellectual activity. He is the Guide—not a finger-post, dead, fixed, and to be found if we happen to go near it—but a living, man-seeking, man-discovering, and man-saving Guide. The Spirit is Immanuel, God with us, supporting us in the strenuous effort to know and do the Divine will, accompanying us, and stronger than all that are against us, for defence and for victory; and not only so, but God *in* us, flowing into and inspiring us; "carrying us whither we would not," making us ashamed of mean and low thoughts, of shuffling subterfuge, of selfish bias in reasoning, of cowardly prejudice, of jealous and envious feeling, constraining us to attempt the higher ranges of thought and aspiration, and awakening and utilizing the whole of our unused force in favour of truth in life and thought and deed.

This is "the Gospel for the day," the most cheering message we have for men made melancholy by the loss of an "old faith," and hopeless of the discovery of a new. These are glad tidings of great joy. "The Spirit of Truth" is nigh thee. Welcome the Word He speaks, the gentle, suasive presence He offers, the Revelation He waits to make to the soul through the Revelation He has made in the Word. O that you

would—and verily you should see the rule of God on earth—yea, even enter into it, and be of it, in increasing peace and joy.

Let us discriminate. The Spirit is not said to give the truth to us, but to guide us, personally and wholly, ourselves actively and vitally concerned in the movement, in intellect and heart, conscience and will, “into all the truth.” “He will guide you” is the Master’s promise. The difference is suggestive. Men do force their intellect to assent to certain conceptions of Christianity and its claims and history, and yet descend to numberless meannesses, degrading themselves and the name they possess, because they have left their conscience out of the realm of truth, as others accept certain propositions concerning Christ, and wonder why the affirmation of the truth of a set of sentences does not bring them the peace and joy of glowing personal trust in the Saviour. You may guide and drill the intellect and lose the man. Solomon found knowledge and lost himself. In Christ, and indeed always in the highest men, on the highest things, the intellect never works alone; but knowing and willing, loving and believing, and doing are one. The *man* in his wholeness is taken into the truth, and made to live in it as in an investing atmosphere, till he is full of it, and lives by it in his whole physical, intellectual, and spiritual nature.

NOTE A.

The Reformation and the Authority of the Bible.—“The objective principle of Protestantism maintains that the Bible, as the inspired record of Revelation, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice; in opposition to the Roman Catholic co-ordination of Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, as the joint rules of faith.

"The teaching of the living Church is by no means rejected, but subordinated to the Word of God; while the opposite theory virtually subordinates the Bible to tradition by making the latter the sole interpreter of the former, and confining interpretation within the limits of an imaginary *consensus patrum*. . . . All the reformers agreed in the principle that the Church has no right to impose upon the conscience articles of faith without clear warrant in the Word of God."—*History of the Church, German Reformation*, Vol. I., pp. 16, 17, Schaff.

NOTE B.

Professor Reuss, speaking to M. Scherer, said: "To identify faith in Christ with the historical belief that is bound up with Biblical documents is to enter on a path which may lead you very far. The least weakening of your theory of the Canon will shake the whole superstructure of your Christianity, and the re-action may be as subtle as it will be radical. Consider whether it would not be prudent to establish your faith on a more sure foundation, and remember that our Reformers initiated the Theology which you call new."—Prof. Reuss, quoted by Dr. Horton in *Revelation and the Bible*, p. vi.

NOTE C.

Dr. Horton on Dogma and the Bible.—"They who think to protect the Bible by a dogma must in the end discredit it, for they imply that their dogma is really the foundation on which the Bible rests. As a matter of fact, the Bible stood before that crude dogma of infallible Inspiration was invented, and the Bible will stand when that dogma has passed away."—*Revelation and the Bible*, p. 25, by R. F. Horton, M.A.

NOTE D.

Dr. Arnold on the Bible and Tradition.—"The anxious endeavour to exalt Tradition and Church Authority to a level with the Scripture, proves sufficiently where the real support of the cause is felt to lie; for no man would ever go to Tradition for the support of what the Scripture by itself teaches."—*Life of Arnold*, Letter to Coleridge, June 26, 1841, p. 420.

VII.

WHY THE BIBLE LIVES; OR, JESUS CHRIST THE SOUL OF REVELATION.

"The Word of God liveth and abideth. All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth ; but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the Word of good tidings which was preached unto you."—*1 PETER i., 23-25.*

THAT is Peter's testimony to the character and contents, vitality and durability of the Revelation of God and man, of life and eternity, in the Bible.

As to James, so to Peter, the "Word of God" mediates the new and regenerate life. By it men are born again, and live their real, true, and perfect life. The seers have always felt and seen that. Moses affirmed that "men do not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The prophet of the Exile saw through the Revelation of the Eternal God, the uprising of a new and eternal life for Israel, though political constitutions were being broken up and Churches were falling to pieces. James says, "With a wish God brought us forth into our new life. He 'mothered' us by the Word of Truth." Peter tells these Christians they were begotten again, not of seed that perishes and

can do no more, but of germs that never die, that maintain their reproductive energy for ever, even the Word of God which liveth and abideth.

That has been the function of the Word of the Lord in all ages, and on the basis that fact affords, Peter distinctly identifies as one and the same, in substance and in regenerative energy : first, the comforting messages of the preacher of the Exile ; next, the good tidings proclaimed by Paul and his comrades to these Asiatic Christians ; and, thirdly, the instructions Peter had already delivered to them as well as those he was now writing. · “There are many echoes in the world, but few voices,” says Goethe ; and the voices, adds Peter, unite in telling the same story, revealing the same living truths, and conveying the same gladdening promises. Centuries divide the pulpits, but the truth they preach is one in its unchanging contents. The evangelical Barnabas, who rouses the faith and hope of the despairing pilgrims of the desert by assuring them of the enlarging and uplifting of Israel’s life through the disciplinary education given them by God, has only seen Christ through the telescope of prophecy as the suffering but triumphant “Servant of God.” Peter saw Christ face to face, knew Him as Jesus of Capernaum and Bethsaida, and dwelt with him as a friend and companion. Paul knew Him as the ascended and reigning Lord ; and yet Peter distinctly asserts that the three messages are the same living and abiding “Word of the Lord.” One is written in Hebrew, translated into Greek, and here quoted. The others are no more than fleeting speech,

current talk, faithful sayings, waiting to be committed to that custodian of the ideas of God and men, the written Word ; but written or spoken they are one in their substance as in their function, they are part of the unchanging Revelation of God, in the process of being successively applied to the changing facts and unchanging elements of human life. They are the Word of the Lord which abideth for ever.

THE "GOSPEL" OF THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT?

What, then, is this "Word" of "good tidings," this permanent and indestructible Revelation, this living and life-giving communication of God to men ?

Can we doubt of what Peter is speaking? Is he not himself still preaching to us the same "good tidings" in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles? Hear we not his strident voice compelling the attention of the hundreds of men who are gathered together at Jerusalem from all parts of the Roman dominion on the Day of Pentecost? Hear we not his bold declarations and daring challenges to the irritated and persecuting members of the Jewish Parliament? Later still, do we not accompany him to the house of Cornelius and sit entranced as he unfolds to the eager listeners the joy-giving Revelation that God is not the God and Saviour of the Jew only, but of all men? Is not this letter itself as the precious amber in which his ideas are preserved ?

Certainly! And with one distinct and decisive voice these four witnesses declare that the good tidings preached by Peter begin and end with Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and Omega of his ministry:

Jesus crucified ; Jesus raised from the dead ; Jesus enthroned and dispensing, as Lord and Ruler of the new society, the wonderful energies of the Spirit ; Jesus as Teacher and Philanthropist ; Jesus as the centre and spring of a conquering hope and as ordained to be Judge of living and dead ; Jesus the stainless Conqueror of sin, the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot, making an end of sin and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. It is His person, His healing and saving work, His fathomless and wise teachings, His kingly sway, that Peter throws into relief in sermon and in epistle. Himself a personal disciple of Jesus, he knows Him, has lived with Him through everything, and he rejoices to serve Him and proclaim Him to men, and in doing it he feels that he is not an innovator bearing a disturbing message, since “to Christ all the prophets bore witness that through His name every one that believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”

For Peter, then, the living and abiding Word, the breathing and life-giving soul of the Revelation preached to men was *Christ Jesus Himself*. Christ in prophecy, Christ in history, Christ in the faith and experience of men, and Christ everywhere, and always as the redeeming God, working through the whole of our human life for the extinction of evil and the establishment of goodness and truth and well-being upon the earth.

For what else can be the meaning of this citation from Isaiah? Why should Peter leap at once into the presence of the herald of the coming deliverance if not to tell us by a decisive instance that the eternal

value of the Old Testament is in its Messianic ideas, its Messianic men, its Messianic principles, and its records of the manifestation of God in his Messianic activities? Why elect this tragic moment in Israel's history, when the people, having come short of the glory God designed for them, were cheered by the good tidings of the arrival of a new leader who should conduct them to a wider field of service and fully equip them for the discharge of loftier and nobler duties? The fact is the older Scripture is conceived by Peter as a *Gospel*. That is its dominant element. It reveals God saving men, casting down the kingdoms of darkness and misrule, of lust and greed, of injustice and wrong; and establishing a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. That is its universal and permanent value. Get hold of that and you have the kernel of the elder Testament. Fight about the husks as bitterly and persistently as you may, yet if you do not, like Abram, see Christ's day coming all through the struggling and confused years, you miss the nourishing fruit of this garden of God. The very genius of the Old Testament, the source of the ethical power of its chronicles and proverbs, of the Inspiration of its songs, and of the spell cast over us by its biographies, is in the foregleams it gives us of Christ Himself. As the men who read the pages of that oldest writing of all, the Book of Nature, discover in its earlier chapters prophecies of the coming man, and assurances of his ascent to moral and spiritual greatness, so men full of the Christian instinct and insight have seen, and still see, that the Old Testament is the record of the movements of

God as Teacher and Saviour, as King and Judge, in the lives of individuals and nations, and pre-eminently in Israel, thereby creating and fashioning "types" and patterns of the coming Christ, by which men were enabled to set their faith and hope in God and to wait patiently for the consolations of His full redemption. This is the luminous centre of the indestructible Book—the golden key to its marvellous and unequalled contents.

CHRIST THE SOUL OF THE BIBLE.

Is, then, Peter no more than a prophet? Much more in every way. Chiefly in this, that he is an Apostle of Christ, that is, an original and authentic witness to the *historic Christ*. Like John, he has heard and seen, tasted and handled, the Word of Life, and the "good tidings" he declares, concern the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto men; tidings of facts which fulfil the prophecies, and prove that the salvation the prophets so long desired to see has really come. So Peter presented Christ Himself as the historic person on whom the faith of men should rest, as the Revelation itself, the living and abiding Word of the Lord.

For Revelation is not simply or mainly *through* Christ, as though He were no more than an agent, but in Christ, as Himself God. In fact, Christ is Revelation—its soul, its substance, its centre and circumference, its all in all. Revelation is not a series of propositions arranged in logical order concerning Christ; not even His ideas of God and man, sin and forgiveness, apart from Himself; not even the magnetic

facts of His ministry, life and death and resurrection, apart from Himself ; not the energies of wisdom and light, of healing and goodness, apart from Himself ; but *Himself*, His personality, all that which makes Him the one gracious and great, human and Divine, being that He is. He, Christ, is the whole content of Revelation. He is the permanent and indestructible centre of both Testaments, the unchanging, inexhaustible seed sown in all the various human fields of the world. As Luther said, in his strong way, "Jesus Christ is the King of the Book." He is the true and actual object of our faith ; not any "code of rules of conduct," not any theories of Divine action on men, but Jesus Himself, who everywhere bids us "come to Him," and always assures us that He is our light, our life, our rest, our peace, and our salvation.

In addition to the witness of the Gospels to Christ in history, we have the witness of the Acts and the Epistles to Christ *in faith and in experience*, illustrating and completing the testimony of the evangelists, and, together with the continuous story of the people of God, establishing beyond the possibility of doubt the doctrine that the enduring and life-giving soul of the Bible is Jesus Christ Himself. The Christ of history becomes the Christ of the heart, of the imagination, of the conscience, and of the will. He is not only seen as a proposition may be seen, and believed in as we may believe in the statements of a confession of faith, but He inspires worship, wins His followers to adore Him, to pray to Him, to plead with Him, to obey Him, to do anything and everything He wishes, to live for Him, if that is possible, and to die for Him, if

that is necessary. He fills the experience of men as a revealing person, enveloping their whole consciousness, setting them free from the tyranny of evil, aiding them in the duties of life, sustaining them in its sorrows, and leading them forward in chivalrous and devoted service of men.

For all through prophecy, history, and faith, Christ is the *Redeemer*. In the first, He is seen "bruised for our iniquities" and "bearing the chastisement of our peace." In the second, as "the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world," and in the third, He is felt as God reconciling the soul to His will, His wisdom, His purposes, His habits of thought and action, and so to His character. Thus He is the same in the yesterday of the prophets, in the to-day of the Gospels, and in the for-ever of the Acts, Epistles, and Christian experience. He gives Himself for us and to us. He does not merely show His love, as a speaker his thought, or an artist the pictures of his fancy; but He comes in the full flush of His inspiring life into the consciousness of each individual as a force, making us to feel God forgiving us; becomes one with us, and aids us as a power of progressive reconciliation until our discordant lives make the sweetest music, and our poor broken characters are re-fashioned from within according to His likeness. Thus the Revelation is redemptive and the Revealer is the Redeemer. Revelation must be redemption for us, for we not only need knowledge but salvation. And of necessity only the act of a person can be a Revelation to, and the redemption of, a person. We may hear sermons in stones and gather instruction

from events, but the real education of man is by man, by character, by soul and life. The forces that teach and deliver us from our sinful selves, draw out our powers and drill them for good work, are living beings, who enter our thought and feeling, and set up a real intercourse with us, and so penetrate our life with theirs. "Souls," says Carlyle, "grow by contact with souls," and the greater and purer the soul that reaches and influences us the finer and surer our growth. Thus the "good tidings" are the means by which Christ enables us to experience the power of God within us unto salvation, attracts us and holds us, and becomes the soul of our soul and the life of our life. For still, men read the Gospels and obtain not only the vision of God but the life of God. They know Him in Christ, they commune with Him, and they have new thoughts of Him and of life and of duty. Life becomes a new thing to them—has new forces. They are new men and live as they never did before. More than the deep, passionate wish of Augustine, "O that I had seen Christ in the flesh," is realised, for Jesus is seen without the veil of human tradition, and He is felt in all His self-evidencing greatness and graciousness as the Friend and Redeemer of the spirit.

WHY THE WORD LIVES.

Now, if this exposition of Peter's good tidings be accurate, we shall have no difficulty in answering the question : why this "Word of the Lord" liveth and abideth for ever? For it can never be outgrown. It is impossible to supersede it, for, according to the

Apostle, it is Christ, who was dead, but is alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and of Hades. It is He who has received an unchangeable priesthood, one that is not handed on from man to man, but continues from age to age as the unique mediation of salvation to men. As no priest can displace Him, so no teacher can, for He is more than all the teachers and prophets put together, and His Inspiration guarantees theirs, and not theirs His.

Since He spake in Jerusalem the growth of human knowledge has been vast in Natural Science, Political Economy, Art and Ethics, but that growth has not cast discredit on a single idea He has expressed, or rendered useless a single precept He has inculcated, or made obsolete any phase of the Revelation he has given. Certainly, so far as we have yet gone, there is not a shadow of reason why one of His words should pass away. Reason grows from more to more. Conscience grows. Races grow in spiritual stature, but Christ is still in front, and year by year we are gravitating to Him and His teaching as the final pattern of character, and the full and final wisdom for life.

Rothe suggests that Christianity is the least immutable thing in the world, and that this is its peculiar glory. It is so, if by Christianity is meant, not "the Word of the Lord," but the system of thought and life in which that Word has been clothed in a particular age, and amongst different races. But Revelation is not a system of philosophy, a Church polity, or a specific creed. It is a Spirit that speaks and acts through various systems, and adapts its speech to the changing needs of man. Christ is life.

Life is the cause of organisation, but organisation is largely determined by environment, by time, place, atmosphere, and the varying needs of men. Still whatever the differences of form, Christ Himself is the one constant Divine element, the eternally-enduring truth underneath all the changing forms and conditions.

Indeed, the growth of Knowledge only makes more manifest the glory of Christ, cuts away the veils of Rabbinical and philosophical tradition which obscure His person, separates and sifts His words from the teachings of the scribes and elders, makes more clear His spirit and deeds, and enables us to see more and more distinctly that the Father hath given to Him to have life in Himself for all mankind. Therefore we say let Knowledge grow from more to more ; let Science advance in its interpretations of the universe of nature and human life ; let Ethics go forward and upward ; they will only cut away the wrappings in which critics and creed-makers have hidden the Christ and lift us to the plane on which we shall see Him as He *is*, and understand Him as the Revelation and the Redeemer of mankind, and so compel us to say to all temptations to leave Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

THE BIBLE INEXHAUSTIBLE.

As it is impossible to displace the Bible, so it is equally impossible to exhaust it. It endures because it is infinite, and it is infinite because it is not merely a series of literary chronicles, songs, biographies and letters, but the record of, and witness to, the infinite

and exhaustless Christ, who is the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. Herder writes : " I take vastly more pleasure in winning a lively apprehension of the Divine in these writings than in racking my brains as to the exact manner in which it existed in the soul of the writers, or upon their tongue, or in their pen. We do not understand in what a number of human effects our soul displays itself, and shall we decide how manifoldly or how simply God works upon it? We cannot get to the bottom of a single Word of God in nature."*

Far less, then, can we expect to get to the bottom of the words of the Bible. Christ is Revelation, and *God* was in Christ. Him we cannot exhaust. Therefore we follow on to know the Lord, and so add to our knowledge of the contents, and to our power of applying the forces of Revelation to the ethical and spiritual progress of mankind. We do not know our Bibles yet, for we only know Christ in part, in fragments and spaces, and not in His vastness and infinity. No generation has comprehended the whole mind of Christ or seen all the wondrous things of His life. Somebody has said, " It takes Jesus to know Jesus ;" certainly the ages have been studying Him, spelling out the meaning of His name, applying His teachings to the individual and social problems of life, and yet we are still at His feet, with eyes open and hearts expectant as newer conceptions of the Saviour appear on the horizon. The Spirit is still leading us into all truth, into the sphere where all truth is, that is, to Christ, and taking of the things

* *Letters on the Study of Theology*, No. XII.

which are His and showing them unto us as we have not yet seen them, and as our fathers never saw them. Thus may we expect the race to attain to the fulness of the stature of the manhood that is in Christ Jesus.

THE BIBLE'S IMMORTALITY.

The Bible is indestructible. Because Jesus lives, it lives also. He is the pledge and guarantee of its immortality. It cannot be holden of death. Buried a thousand times beneath the accumulated heaps of hostile criticism it rises again to newness of life. It is absolutely insuppressible. The continuity of the Bible as a spiritual and ethical force in the life of the world is one of the outstanding marvels of history. Recall its story. Reckon up the number, the strength, the malignity of the open and avowed enemies it has encountered, and whose extinction it has survived. Look at the character and power of the schools of criticism, and note the way in which they have come and gone, whilst it has kept on for ever. Each had found the mystic key for its explanation. Each knew more than its predecessor. Each had the newest fact to supply, and each did its critical work, some rendering real service, others none. But the Bible abides, attracts, conquers. Add to this the greatest wonder of all—that it has lived through the inconceivably foolish and misguided behaviour of its friends. No book was ever more unwisely loved, no book ever suffered more from its admirers. The crude interpretations of its message, the wild theories preached in its name and backed by perversions of its texts, the absence of sense and method in the

exposition of its statements, the preposterous schemes and movements undertaken for its defence, convince us that if the Book had not an absolutely indestructible centre it would have disappeared long ago. But He lives, and is its life, therefore it endures, and shall endure for evermore.

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime :
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so ?"
"Just one," said he ; then said, with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."
And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages sceptic blows have beat upon ;
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone.

Add to these facts, the glorious truth that through the Bible, Christ Jesus keeps up the succession of regenerate lives, of men who say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and you have the ever-increasing evidence of the morally and spiritually reproductive energy of the Word of the Lord. Every Christ-filled man is a witness to its power.

CHRIST THE ONLY MASTER.

Let us then rejoice that we are not left to the dominion of the letter, but are under the authority of a gracious and benign Person, a Revealer who is Himself the Redeemer, and who does not commit our training to a Book and shut us up with it, but is Himself the Leader and Teacher of souls, and who

does His work by the communication of Himself in and through this Book. He is the object of our faith, it is on Him we rest, in Him we find peace, and by Him we live. He is the one supreme spiritual authority. Three usurpers have appeared. (1) The boldest and most daring is the Pope, who ejects Christ from His seat whilst using His name, and violates His laws whilst claiming to be His vicar. (2) The second consists of the "Councils" and their decrees, who overlay the teachings of Christ with their opinions, claim that their deductions are equi-pollent with His Revelation, and assure us that we are outside His salvation unless we yield homage to their decisions. (3) Thirdly, come the "verbal infallibilists," who are afraid to leave us alone with our Master and Teacher, and fetter us with a theory where His truth would make us free. But one is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren.

In the worlds of criticism we have tribulation, but in Christ we have peace ; therefore he that believeth on Him shall not make haste as though he were in danger, because the critics see a fault in Abraham, and faith in Rahab, cruelty in Jael and courage in Jephthah ; nor will he declare that the foundations are destroyed because it is doubted whether Daniel wrote the whole, or any part of the Book that bears his name, or that the second letter called after Peter is not his production. Christ is the living and abiding soul of Revelation, not the Hebrew vowel points, not questions contingent on an absent punctuation, not the authorship of the Levitical regulations for worship. No ! His is the Name which is above every name, and His Revelation

is the one given among men whereby we must be saved. The Scriptures are the fruit of the faith of the first Christians in Christ Himself, the records of Christ's life and work on the earth and in their hearts ; and to have Him, to be known of Him, and to know Him, that is what the Book is for, and that is life, life for evermore.

How precious, therefore, is the Book which tells us of Him, and which is the one most effective instrument used by the Spirit for the communication of Christ Himself to men ! It is scarcely surprising that some men have mistakenly converted it into an idol ! Here is the direct testimony of those who saw and heard the Incarnate Word, as well as the record of the visions of the men who longed to see and hear Him. Here we have the witness of the Apostles and the first Christians to the grace and power of Jesus in them and over them : and seeing this, we, like the Samaritans, say as we fall at His feet, "Now we believe, not because of the saying of Peter and John, Paul and Luke, but because we have seen Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Here we have His words, and abiding in them we are His disciples indeed, and become morally free, spiritually strong and glad. Heine says, "He who has lost his God can find Him again in this Book, and towards him who has never known Him it wafts the breath of the Divine Word." Shall we not then count it above all price ? Shall we not eagerly and gladly send it to the ends of the earth ? Who does not welcome the sublime mission of translating the wonderful works of God into all the

languages of the earth, and sending the translation to all men, since we are not only assured that no man knows the Bible who does not know Christ, but also that the Bible is the Chief God-given way to the Saviour and His salvation !

NOTE A.

Zwingli on Christ in the Bible.—“ Zwingli emphasises the Word of God contained in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, as the only rule of Christian faith and practice. This is the objective principle of protestantism which controls his whole theology. Zwingli first clearly and strongly proclaimed it in his *Conclusions* (1523), and assigned to it the first place in his system ; while Luther put his doctrine of justification by faith on the subjective principle in the foreground, and made it the article of the standing or falling Church. But with both reformers the two principles so-called resolve themselves into the one principle of Christ, as the only and sufficient source of saving truth and grace, against the traditions of men and the works of men. *Christ is before the Bible and is the beginning and end of the Bible.* Evangelical Christians believe in the Bible because they believe in Christ, and not *vice versa*. Roman Catholics believe in the Bible because they believe in the Church, as the custodian and infallible interpreter of the Bible.”—Schaff. *History of the Church*, XI., 90.

NOTE B.

Martin Luther on Christ as the End of the Bible.—Luther says in the preface to the Epistle of James, “ This is the true touchstone of all books, whether they make Christ their sole topic and aim or not, since all Scripture shows Christ (Rom. iii.) ; and St. Paul wishes to know nothing but Christ (1 Cor. ii.). That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic, though St. Peter and Paul should teach it ; again, that which preaches Christ is apostolic, though Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod should say it.”

NOTE C.

Wycliffe's Witness.—“ In all cases where he pronounces a judgment upon any doctrine, or upon any ecclesiastical custom and institution, it is always the Bible which he employs as the standard of truth. He goes back to the teaching of the Redeemer ; he points

to the Apostles and their deeds; the authority of the Primitive Church is everywhere appealed to. To bring out the doctrine of the Scriptures (*fides Scripturar*) as of supreme authority is his highest aim."—*John Wycliffe and his English Precursors*, by Lechler. Cf., pp. 236-7, 244, 436.

NOTE D.

Bornemann says the Bible is "a collection of books which are written in God's Spirit and in a Divine faith-power, out of life for life, out of history for history; their unique centre, the touchstone and end of the whole and of its several parts is and remains the living historical person of Jesus Christ."—Quoted by Dr. Horton in *Revelation and the Bible*, p. 13.

NOTE E.

Prophetism in Israel.—"The great change in perspective, which the new criticism introduces into sacred history, consists in making the central figure of this history not Moses on Mount Sinai, but the company of prophets, the men who spoke to Israel during the last two centuries of the Jewish kingdom, and during the Babylonian captivity, from about 800 to 536 before Christ. The prophets, who according to the traditional conceptions appear in times of defection to recall to Israel forgotten truths, are in reality the creators of these truths, and prophetism, in place of being the flower of Judaism, is its very root."—*Selected Essays of James Darmesteter*, translated by Helen B. Jastrow, p. 23.

VIII.

HOW JESUS TREATS THE OLD TESTAMENT.

“But Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”—MATTHEW xxii., 29.

THE place of these elder Scriptures in the thought and life of Christian men is confessedly one of the grave and urgent problems of the hour. The Churches of the Saviour, at home and abroad, with confessions and creeds and without them, within their Colleges and far beyond them, are face to face with the inquiry, and cannot put it off. Men of noble spirit, high aims, and beautiful character are profoundly stirred, lest the slightest injury should be done to the “earthen vessel” in which the heavenly treasure of Revelation is contained. Others, no less sincere in their affection for the Scriptures, or enthusiastic and intelligent in their devotion to the welfare of souls, cannot withhold their speech. They burn to utter a word of deliverance and help. They see the young and earnest minds of the age turning their backs on the temple in which Christ Himself dwells, because those that stand at the temple doors insist on the acceptance of their specific conceptions of the growth and character of the two Testaments before they enter;

others, not a few, are seen lingering on the steps, missing the enriching and quickening communion of the Divine Redeemer, because they must debate about the record which contains the words spoken to the fathers by the prophets. Such, indeed, is the stress of the controversy that the Nestor of modern statesmanship, richly freighted with knowledge gained in a neighbouring field, adds to the many crowns of his old age a series of contributions marked by keen insight, wide research, and rich suggestiveness, concerning the story of the Creation in the Book of Genesis;* and a body of younger, but most cautious and reverent, scholars break through the traditions of a lifetime and imperil the cherished friendships of years to proclaim their acceptance of the conclusions established by the diligent search of three generations of students of the Word.† Diocesan conferences cannot exclude it from their debates, Church Courts are agitated by its presence, College Halls ring with its strife, ancient creeds are feeling its threatening approach. One Bishop, admitting that the controversy must go on, regrets that it cannot be conducted in Latin. But that day is passed. The monopoly of the ecclesiastics is ended. "For better, for worse," the battle is carried into the newspapers and the streets. Silence is impossible. God wills it. It is a gate He has opened, and, like many others to which He has led men, it is "a gate of tribulation." Yet He "who is appointed Heir of all things, and through whom He made the ages," will conduct us through it,

* Cf. W. E. Gladstone, *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*.

† *Lux Mundi*, edited by Rev. Charles Gore, M.A.

and prove again, as He has so often, that He is leading us to wider realms of knowledge and loftier heights of service in His holy Kingdom.

II. Confiding, therefore, in Him as Master and Leader, that dread tyrant, "fear of consequences," ought not to deflect the even balance of our judgment, break up our intellectual calm, or confuse the issue before us. Truth and fact are eternal. Our verdicts are the writing on the sands—visible at dawn and gone before the sunset. His truth—old and new, new and old—endures to all generations; and although our own treasures of reason and good sense and charity are carried in very "earthen vessels indeed," yet our debates ought to be "means of grace," and aid in the clearer apprehension and fuller enjoyment of Him who is our life, our life for evermore.

And they will be thus fruitful, if we are inviolably, unflinchingly, and promptly true. God's first requirement is absolute sincerity. He never asks us to shuffle. Truth itself is frank and simple, and thrives best when spoken with directness and frankness, and provided always that it be uttered with that charity of Jesus which is the true bond of souls, it must bring us to Him who is the real Master in this controversy, and whose *real* voice we need most of all to hear. For He is Judge, His authority is absolute and final. We take all our questions to Him, and have no desire and no need to go beyond His verdicts. He is the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, and the Christianity He gives, claims for its own, and absorbs into its working energies, everything that is

true. Even His *methods* are authoritative. His use of life, and of its various and manifold contents, its lilies of the field and friends at Bethany, its strong debates and ancient books, as well as His spirit, is our pattern. If we can find out what is His idea of the Old Testament, what His way of using that marvellous collection of writings—a collection which entered so largely into His growth, shaped His conception of His work, fed His consciousness of Messiahship, and determined His attitude towards the religious teachers of the times—we shall be led into truth, for here, as elsewhere, “He speaks with authority, and not as the Scribes.”

Speaking some years ago at a London conference, Dr. Temple, the Bishop of London, said, “Although the Bible was the great text-book of religious instruction of the world, the Lord did not first have the Bible written and then send forth His disciples to lecture on it. He sent forth His Church, He made His Church, He inspired His Church first. He sent forth men to do the work, and He supplied them with the New Testament as a great instrument by which they were to do it.” So that, according to this reasoning, the Church is “the seat of authority in religion,” the judge who ends the strife; and her deliverances as to the place of the Old Testament in the thought and life of Christian men are binding on the individual Christian. That “Church,” I need hardly say, is no new claimant for the place that rightfully belongs only to our Lord. The voice is old and familiar. Martin Luther, when he rose to advance the God-inspired intellectual regeneration of Europe by supplying the conditions

for its spiritual and ethical regeneration, faced that usurper, and by the over-flowing gladness with which he recognised Christ as the one Lord of his soul, drove her out of the place to which she had been lifted, and by the proclamation of the doctrine of justification through a living and real plighting of the soul in love and trust to Christ Jesus, initiated that era of theological freedom and religious progress in which we are now living.* A little more than sixty years ago, new advocates of the pre-Lutheran dogma appeared in the heart of Protestantism. Cardinal Newman and Dr. Pusey, with various modifications, resolutely contended for the authority of the Church ; and the first, with a consistency which does him credit, followed the lead of his doctrine to its true goal in Romanism ; and though the successors of Dr. Pusey are capitulating to modern criticism in points most vital to sacerdotalism, yet we may rest assured that we and our children must do battle, with Lutheran decision and courage, against the ancient enemy. Again, we must affirm the maxim, " Back to Jesus Himself," to Jesus in the regenerate soul, in the reason, conscience, and heart. He, and He alone, holds the throne of the *Divinely* authoritative element in religion, and speaks to the human element,

* Luther said in his controversy with Eck, "The Church cannot give any more authority or power to the Scripture than it has of itself, and Council cannot make that to be Scripture which is not Scripture by its own nature." Cf. Calvin, Institut. I., VII., ss. 1, 4, 5, and VIII., 1. " There has very generally prevailed a most pernicious error that the Scriptures have only so much weight as is conceded to them by the suffrages of the Church, as though the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended on the arbitrary will of men."

i.e., to our spiritual consciousness, so as to secure its immediate response. To get certainty of step in religion we must go to Him. He is the norm and perfected type of the eternal religion. He rules the race in its highest departments of life. Authentic Christianity is what corresponds best to His thought and life, and, therefore, the supreme task is to find what He thought and how He lived. We cannot be wrong in agreeing with Him. Though all the Church courts in Christendom condemn us, our doctrine of the Old Testament will be right if it is His, and it is safe to say it will be wrong if it does not accord with His. It is a small thing to be adjudged "heretic" by men if He approve us ; and though the Churches in universal chorus vouch our orthodoxy, if He says, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God," nothing can save us from peril and loss. Therefore the question of questions is, "What is the place of the Old Testament in the life and teaching of our Lord?"

III. It may seem open to doubt whether we act fairly in taking the scathing rebuke addressed by Christ to the Sadducees as the one key to our answer to this inquiry. The saying is local, and addressed to one party only in the series of controversies, and that party not the one the most enslaved by the idolatry of the letter, though, as Christ proves, a party very grievously afflicted with blindness as to the Spirit and Revelation of God. The condemnation referred only to one subject, to one passage of the law of Moses * and to one poor anecdote.

* Deuteronomy xxv., 5.

But if you go through the four Gospels with this clue in your hands you discover there is no passage that aids so largely, or that conducts to better positions, for judging fairly and completely the attitude of Christ towards the law and the prophets, and towards the methods of treating them in vogue amongst His contemporaries. The charge is typical and representative. Nine out of ten of the assertions of the Teacher on this subject start from this position. Nearly all He says to the Pharisees and Sadducees, scribes and lawyers, is cast in this mould, and illustrates and drives home that grave indictment of the leaders of the Jewish nation, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God," at the back of them.

And yet the Old Testament was the one thing they professed to know, and to know beyond mistake. It was their chief study; they had arranged for its regular and systematic reading in the Temple and in the synagogues. They preserved the sacred rolls with scrupulous care, and used them with genuine affection. They taught their contents to their children, and recited them in their homes as they rose up and as they sat down. They printed the charmed letters on the borders of their robes, wore them on their foreheads, and gave "bold advertisement" of their devotion to the "oracles of God." This Book was "The man of their counsel." Of it they said with deep feeling, "O, how we love Thy law! It is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb, it is more than our necessary food." Emphatically they were men of one Book. About it they

fought with the fierce eagerness of ecclesiastics and theologians ; for its study they created and sustained schools, and divided and sub-divided into parties and factions ; the letter of it they guarded with pious care, and were ready to die in its defence ; and yet, in the face of all this seemingly well-intentioned devotion, Christ's ministry was one persistent censure of their blind, blundering, and mischievous use of the Word of God. " You err," said He, " where you think you are infallible, and are abysmally ignorant where you think you know best." It was as if we were to tell elect Frenchmen they erred in manners and taste ; charge accomplished Italians with ignorance of music or art ; impeach the disciplined Germans as dolts in strategy ; or denounce typical Englishmen as not men of affairs and practical sense. A graver charge Christ could not have made against the religious leaders of a religious people, and yet He not only made it, but returned to it again and again, never shrinking from wounding their susceptibilities if only He might arouse their conscience, or from provoking their anger if He might but open their eyes to the vision of God. For they were guilty of betraying a great trust, and as their conscientiousness did not abate their folly, so their devotion did not diminish the mischievousness of their actions.

Not in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke alone do we meet with the signs and proofs of this reforming energy. It is exhibited in greater intensity in the Gospel of John. In an earlier chapter the " Jews " resent the attacks of the Young Teacher, and seek to blunt the edge of His weapons by telling

Him that He is becoming their accuser. Accuser, indeed! "There is one who accuseth you." Who is it, do you ask? The Roman who rules over you? No! Who is it? It is Moses, your own Moses, "in whom you have set your hope," and in whose writings you expect to find eternal life. He it is who condemns you. All that clearly proves that Christ's mood is one of revolt against the current and authoritative methods of treating the Jewish Scriptures, and that His ministry in Jerusalem is one sustained protest against the usurpation for selfish and ecclesiastic ends of the gracious gift of God in Revelation. To the religious leaders of the nation He was the "heretic;" He overthrew the law that came by Moses; His doctrine was a "new theology," revolutionary and destructive; and He was at length condemned and destroyed at the instance of those who led the theological courts. The battle between Christ and the Jews was fought on the Old Testament; the Jews won for the hour and the day, but Christ conquered for all eternity.

Is not this the meaning of the fact that in the Great Temptation in the wilderness Satan uses the Scriptures, according to the current Jewish practice, to detach the Saviour from His redemptive mission? The Devil voices the temptations of the time, and in meeting him, as he comes Bible in hand, in this initial encounter at the threshold of His work, the Teacher confronts the hard and blind literalism of the day, and in conquering it forecasts and foretells His final victory over all His foes. The Satanic literalism that kills is heard in the words, accurate

enough, Biblical enough, "It is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and on their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." But Jesus said to him: "Again it is written: Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God." That, "*again*," is the window through which we look into the mind of Christ. You cannot, He says in effect, judge the Book fairly, or use it wisely, in fragments. The whole of Nature is not seen in one fossil or in one flower. You must take large views. Define man as you see him in an asylum, and he is insane. Build up your description of him from his behaviour as king of Dahomey, and he is a savage. Construct your idea of him from Shakespeare, and he is a paragon of intellectual power. You must go deeper and further. Scripture is a unity. It needs to be read with *reason*. The letter kills; it is the spirit that gives life. So Christ, from the day of his conflict with Satan to the close of His ministry, steadfastly sets Himself, without pause or break, against the whole trend of the cherished ideas concerning the character and purpose of the Hebrew teaching, and against the methods of interpreting it in use in His day. That is clear and indisputable. He judges both the Book and its expounders. He criticises it and them, them and it, and by criticism rescues it and sets it free to resume its original mission of light and life to the souls of men.

Criticism is not, then, the sign of barrenness and decadence. The dead do not criticise. It is one of the proofs of the arrival of an exuberant vitality, of

fuller and truer life, yea, a sign that God Himself is at work amongst us, patiently gathering up and re-energising the purposes men have temporarily frustrated, and graciously recalling us from the misuse of his gifts to Himself, the real fount and source of all true religion. Like Manoah, we dread the arrival of the delivering angel; like the Jews, we will not listen to God unless He uses the old forms and clothes Himself in the long-familiar robes; but the angel is from the Eternal, and the Christ who rebukes us and warns us is none other than God our Redeemer.

Most nations have prized their thrilling stories of the rescue of some captive maiden of surpassing worth and loveliness. Greece with its far-famed Helen, the beautiful daughter of Zeus, leads a long procession of victors, one of whom is seen in a picture, painted by a young and highly-gifted artist, with rich suggestiveness and masterly skill, representing the rescue of the Sleeping Brynhild by the great-hearted Sigurd. The moment chosen for the scene is that in which the chief, who has dared the iron fence and wall of fiercest flame, seeks to arouse the maiden from her sleep and to accomplish her deliverance. Such a captive was the Old Testament in the days when Christ came to seek and save that which was lost; and He, God's Hero, at the peril of His life and by the sacrifice of Himself, effected a rescue, so that they—Revelation, the daughter of God, and He, the Son of the Father—might “wend the world together in the season of the sun.” Hence Christ does not only redeem the soul, but all other things, for man's noblest use and service—nature and

literature, things present and things past. He is the universal Redeemer, and when we see His newly-bestowed gift through His eyes we shall join in saying, "Thanks be to God for *this* unspeakable gift."

IV. In this work of rescue Christ appears as first the asserter of the fact that the Old Testament is *the Book of and for the Race*.

The Jew, goaded by fierce and prolonged persecution, had nourished into over-mastering strength his pride of race, with the food supplied to him in the story of his ancestors, in their patriotic songs, quickening biographies, and far-reaching prophecies. Brilliant pictures of a departed prosperity fired patriotism, and the sense of political dependence charged patriotic feeling with keen hatred of foreigners. Forcing the facts and ideas of Revelation through the heated moulds of their feelings, they ceased to think of the God of Adam as more than the God of the Jews—a God who had not forgotten, but expressly excluded, nine-tenths of His family from His favours that He might confer special advantages on the Jews. They were the chosen people. They had "the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the laws, and the service of God, and the promises." No doubt; but God's gifts are not meant for selfish and exclusive use. They carry responsibility to the last ounce of their value. But the Jews had turned their dignities into self-aggrandising luxuries, and took warrant from their election to treat with bitter scorn and supercilious contempt all other peoples on earth. It is a common sin. In his measureless greed,

man exploits the universe for his own gratification, converts lands and streams, Churches and Cathedrals, books and buildings, into exclusive personal property, up to the full limit of his power and opportunity.

But scarcely had the young Preacher lifted His voice when men heard the crash of His mighty hammer, shattering to atoms this idol of the Jewish mind. Standing in the synagogue at Nazareth, addressing His fellow-villagers, He tore the veil from their eyes and forced them to look on the revealing face of the naked truth. Claiming to be the Herald of God's acceptable year, He told His listeners God was not, had not been, and could not be, held back in His mercy by the fence of race. He did not regulate His favours by a geographical map, but caused His sun to shine on the evil and the good. His gifts were never meant to pamper self-will and unbrotherly hate, but to nourish kindness, goodness, and universal brotherhood. Divine elections are expansions. The one is chosen for the good of the many, the unit for the millions. "He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing." Did not their own Scriptures say, Naaman, the Syrian, received his cleansing through a prophet? and was not the widow of Zarephath refreshed by the visit of a messenger of God?

"And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue as they heard these things." They knew what He meant. They caught a glimpse of the wide range of His words, they felt how sharply such teaching collided with their cherished convictions of God, the Scriptures, and their nation; and as they

could not resist the wisdom with which He spake, they sought to take away His life.

Thus Christ lifted the Hebrew writing into the light of the Divine Fatherhood, and showed that as God is not partial and exclusive, so His Book is not. The Revelation, in its distinctive elements, its conception of God, righteousness, redemption, and of the Eternal Kingdom, came through the Hebrew people. It was their gift to the world, and, as such, stands by itself. But it is not blighted by any shrivelled partialities, or dimmed by tribal selfishness. Partialisms, indeed! Its humanity is its glory, and its breadth and comprehensiveness its power. It begins with Adam, not Abraham. Enoch walks with God as well as Isaiah. Noah preaches the Lord our Righteousness as well as Jeremiah. Melchizedek finds a welcome in the gallery of illustrious builders of the City of God as well as Daniel, Balaam as well as Bezaleel, and Cyrus as well as Solomon. The drama of the Book of Job appears within the same sacred covers as the oracles of Micah and Ezekiel, and the "Song of Songs" on human love keeps company with the Psalms of the Good Shepherd and of the Imperishable Hope. The prosaic and everyday proverb serves in the same ministry as rapt Isaiah; and the family register takes its place with the noblest literary products of the Spirit of God. Nothing is common or unclean. The "Inspiration of Selection" does not shrink from quoting and incorporating the literature of the peoples of the earth. It cites their traditions, gives their genealogies, adds chapters from the annals of Egypt, and reports "the

burden of the Lord " concerning Moab and Babylon, Damascus and Assyria, Egypt and Arabia. We speak of " foreign elements " in our Bible. There are none. It is God's Book, and nothing belonging to His child is or can be foreign. Truth is universal. It is of no clime or race, and " the Spirit of Truth " guides into and uses all truth ; therefore says Paul, writing to the Church in Rome, " whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for *our* learning," Gentiles as well as Jews, " that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope." Hear, therefore, and heed the Word of the Lord Jesus, as by His use of the Old Testament He declares that it has immense and unexhausted stores for the spiritual quickening and guidance of the whole human race. We are only just beginning to know its wealth ; and as Pentecost was accompanied by a fresh opening-up of the sacred mine, so may the present re-discovery of prophet and psalmist be attended by an outpouring of the Spirit of God on all flesh ! The Renaissance of the Old Testament is the harbinger of a Spiritual Reformation.

(2) The Book this elect Jew thus recovered for universal use has a special mission and is given for a special purpose. It is a Revelation of the God of Righteousness, and is thereby pre-eminently the *Book of Conduct*; and one of the chief functions of the Redeemer is to raise to indisputable supremacy its ethical qualities and powers.

As His first sermon struck at the pinched particularism of the Jews of Nazareth, so His first act in

Jerusalem struck at the enslaving effect of a blind literalism on the conscience. It is often seen that the more men make of the letter the less they find of the spirit. The stoutest defenders of "orthodoxy" are not infrequently the least beautiful in soul and just in behaviour. Devotion to the external attends the decay of a spiritual faith. Men make up for conscious defects of temper and spirit by exaggerated and vehement defences of "the Temple" and "the Letter." High art in worship tends to artificiality, and weakens the moral fibre. Formalism and hypocrisy are twins. The brilliant and young Alfred Vaughan sums up the history of elaborate and ornate ritual in his "Hours with the Mystics," saying, "The introduction of art into religion ends, not in art becoming religious, but in religion becoming an art." Those who scruple about the mint, and anise, and cummin, mostly neglect the weightier matters of the law; are the first "to devour widows' houses; for a pretence make long prayers;" make much of the gold of the Temple, less of the Temple, and, least of all, of God.* Thus the scrupulous Pharisees forbade any one to swear by the gold of the Temple, and yet placidly suffered the Court of the Gentiles, the part of the Temple reserved to the stranger, to be turned into an open market. This ghastly and wicked despisal of man as man roused the soul of the Peasant Reformer to a white heat of indignation and pity, and away He went amongst the guilty traffickers, scattering them as an autumnal storm does the dead leaves, backing the moral Majesty of His person with the

* Matthew xxiii., 13-36.

authority of the saying, “ It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, and ye have made it a den of robbers.” That “ word was quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword,” and the invaders fled like men that dreaded their deserved doom.

Nothing is more flagrant than the way in which the contemporaries of our Lord degraded the Word of God to the low level of their selfish desires. One of the Ten Words, *e.g.*, was for children, and read, “ Honour thy father and mother.” Yes, said these ecclesiastics, but with qualifications ; not in their old age and need, with your substance. Label that “ Corban,” divert it to “ sacred ” uses, and defraud your parents, so “ they made void the Commandments of God by their traditions,” and struck a fatal blow at the health and happiness of family life, and through that, at the progress and stability of the State.*

Nor was this the only case in which they made a ruin and called it worship. Owing “ to the hardness of their hearts ” a fatal looseness of the marriage tie was permitted. Divorce was easy. The family was imperilled in its chief interests. Whereupon Christ, exerting the authority He claims, abrogates the inferior law which had come into use owing to their depravity, and goes back to, and re-enthrones, the ordinance God established at the beginning.† So in

* Matthew xv., 1-9.

† Matthew xix., 1-10.—*Cf.* Andrew Fuller, Works, 487. “ In what Jesus now taught, He was not against the *mind* of Moses or of God, neither of whom approved of divorce except in case of fornication ; but barely permitted it to prevent a greater evil. And though the law respecting marriage, as given to Israel, was less pure than the original law of creation”

the questions He puts about Himself, in the allusions He makes to historical incidents, in the citations He gives from the prophets, He is feathering the arrows He wings to the consciences of men. Everywhere He recalls to higher ideals and to a purer ethic. The Book is for Him the basis of moral appeal, a summons to righteousness. With it He wakes from sleep those who are resting on the poppy-filled pillow of prejudice, and gives them light and power for a nobler life, thus making the Scripture profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.*

(3) But the incident before us, like many other passages in the Gospels, reminds us that Jesus regarded His Bible as pre-eminently *a Book of the Spirit; of the inward and higher life.* To Him it is the message of the Infinite Spirit to the heart of man, and is never judged aright until it is seen in its essential *inwardness*, as it is never used aright until it is allowed to carry us to its goal of Divine righteousness. Of that inwardness only a few here and there —a devout Simeon, a prophetess like the aged Anna, or an eager seeker after truth like the wistful Nathanael, had any glimpse. From the majority it was hidden altogether, and their use of the Old Testament was reduced to a fruitless, if solemn, repetition of its letter. For example, the law said, "Thou shalt not kill," and Israel said "Amen," but they

*Matthew xii., 38, 39; xiii., 14; xxii., 13-42; xxii., 44.; 2 Timothy iii., 16.

saw no more in it than the taking away of the physical life by a swift and brutal blow. Jesus, with an emphasis of personal authority that rings again and again in the *Sermon on the Mount*, and with a vivid contrast between the Old and the New that hints defiance, drives His hearers back on the deeper significance of the command, saying, "In old time it was said, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but I say to you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council; and whoever shall say, 'Thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire." In typical instances, like murder, adultery, the taking of oaths, treatment of enemies, and the love of the neighbour, the searching glance of the Teacher pierces at once to the motives and springs of life, and forces them into the clear and all-revealing radiance of the eternal law of God.

It is in a different and more doctrinal direction that the same searching spiritual power appears here. The Sadducees have cited their one law, and told their one anecdote, and challenged the verdict of the Saviour thereon. At once Christ sweeps away from the petty tale, and from their hollow and superficial objection to the immortality of man, on to the relation which the living God holds to men, proving that to the thought and speech of Moses, the immortality of man was embraced and involved in the eternity of God, for He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. No wonder the listening multitudes were astonished. The dead sayings of Moses rose into newness of life and became a gospel, a miracle of

speech no less than the resurrection of Lazarus was a miracle of power. The "Light of the World" shone with such effulgence that the poor little academic questions of the curious and carping Sadducees shrank into an insignificance that invited contempt ; and the truth stood revealed that these Scriptures were not meant to suggest topics for wordy debate, but were God's food for souls, the bread which God gives so that man may live eternally ; for it is written "Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

V. Going deeper still into the mind that was in Christ, we come upon another aspect of the Old Testament, not second in value to any of those we have considered, and without which they are palpably and fatally incomplete.

It is a significant fact and a strong argument for the authority of the Personal Christ that He said so little concerning the law and the prophets to His immediate disciples. Of course we may fairly suppose that He said much more than is reported ; but from the few statements we have, it is evident Christ did not mean them to depend on it, but upon Him, and that He wished them to see in the Book, as He saw, the forecast of His appearing, the programme and plan of His work, the outline of His life, the prophecy of His sufferings, death, and victory. Central and fundamental to Christ's view of the Old Testament is the fact that it is the record of the *Religion of Redemption*. "Think not," He said, "that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets : I come not to

destroy but to fulfil." "Moses wrote of Me." "The Scriptures testify of Me;" and after His Resurrection He comforted the hearts of His distressed followers by saying, "These are My words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their mind that they might understand the Scriptures ; and He said unto them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day ; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

It is obvious, then, (1) that in those Scriptures Jesus found the *ideal* of His life—to do the Will of His Father ; to found a Divine and Heavenly rule on the earth. (2) Nor is it less clear that He saw there what all his contemporaries failed to recognise, viz., that the *method* of reaching that ideal was one of *sacrifice* : the kingdom was to be founded on Redemption, and the Redemption was to be effected through suffering and blood and death. (3) And in adopting that method and becoming obedient to the death of the Cross He was nourished and sustained by the Word of God. His citation of the passage "Man lives by every Word of God" was the testimony of experience, the expression of conviction ; and (4) since His way to that obedience was blocked by many foes, He used the *Word* as "the Sword of the Spirit," and gained thereby an eternal victory.

To Him, therefore, the Old Testament is mainly a

record of the Revelation of God's redemptive aim and plan; the authentic story of God's self-activity as Saviour, of His communicating Himself to elect persons like Abraham and Moses, manifesting His character and purposes in the life of a theocratic people, and through them preparing for the recovery and renewal of all men. The Book is Divine, a record of Revelation, a beginning of the Gospel. The Messiah-idea is its ground-plan, and Christ Himself builds on it a tabernacle of God for men. This is the conception which perfects and completes the representation of the Old Testament in the thought and use of the Saviour, and binds it in inseparable union to the writings of that newer Testament, which portrays the life of Him "who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;" who makes an end of sin "by His sacrifice," and brings in an everlasting righteousness.*

VI. And now, in the light of this exposition, how do some of our present questions concerning the Old Testament look? Keeping steadfastly before us (1) that Christ Jesus claims to be Judge of the Book; (2) that He adopts a supremely spiritual *method* of interpreting it; (3) that He treats it as the Book of the Human Race; the Book for the Inspiration of

* "The real use of the earlier record is not to add something to the things revealed in Christ, but to give us that clear and all-sided insight into the meaning and practical worth of the perfect scheme of Divine Grace which can only be attained by tracing its growth."—Prof. Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 6.

Conduct ; the Book of the Soul ; and, above all, as the Record of the Divine Process of Human Redemption ; what conclusions clearly and certainly follow ?

They are many : I can only cite one or two.

(1) *The Christianity of Christ Jesus is absolutely independent of the findings of scholars* as to the authorship of particular books or parts of books ; as to the literary vehicle of Divine facts and ideas, tradition or drama, song or proverb ; as to the composite character of the books themselves, and the probabilities that they have been edited and re-edited before they reached their present condition. For (a) Christianity is not in the strict sense a book religion. Christ Jesus lifts Himself above the Pearl of Books itself, and says, with a reiteration that seems meant to free His followers for ever from the tyranny of the letter, "I am the Light of the World ;" "I am the Bread of Life ;" "I am the Door ;" "I fulfil the law and the prophets ;" "Come unto Me ;" "Take My yoke ;" "Learn of Me." Christianity is Christ Jesus, and to be united to Him in faith and love is to be a Christian. (b) Moreover, Jesus wrote nothing Himself. Surely if the exact literary form of His "mighty sayings" were of intrinsic value and indispensable to our Christianity He would have written some of them Himself word for word ; and the Spirit that glorifies Him would not have suffered the variations in the reports of His sayings found in our Gospels. If Christ Jesus held it vital that a Creed marked out with the precision of mathematical

lines should be believed or recited, it is scarcely too much to say He would have furnished us with it. But He did not write a line. That abstinence is itself a Revelation.

Be it, then, that criticism has at length determined beyond appeal that the Five Books of Moses, whilst essentially Mosaic—Mosaic at the core and heart of them—are not all, syllable by syllable, the actual production of the Hebrew law-giver, that does not imperil a single truth of Christianity or darken a single idea of Revelation; nor ought it to abate in the slightest degree our confidence and interest in the Old Testament. Albeit, Christ quotes Moses, and alludes to David in citing Psalms, yet a fair and just interpretation of these references cannot carry the conclusion that when Christ speaks of Moses He teaches that Moses wrote the account of his own death, or delivers an opinion as to the way in which the books bearing his name grew, whence he derived the fragments he cites, and whether the books were kept open for subsequent additions. If a speaker quotes Shakespeare, he is not held to deliver a verdict on the sources of his history, the changes to which his text has been subjected, or to vouch for the accuracy of any particular version. Jude quotes Enoch, but no one hints that the "Book of Enoch" is, therefore, to be put in the Canon; and Paul cites Aratus, but it is not suggested that he expresses any judgment on his character and works.* Let us

* *Expositor*, IV. Series, Vol. IV., p. 457. "Yet it can easily be shown that the Hebrews did not intend by such a title (as 'Psalms of or to David') to state that King David wrote the Psalm which

preserve our souls in peace. "The Word of the Lord abideth for ever, and this is the Word of good tidings which was preached unto you."

(2) This, too, is as healing and salutary as it is clear, that *Jesus is the final test of the morality, and also of the doctrinal teaching of the Old Testament.* Christ judges the legislation of Moses, as well as the emendations of the Rabbis, and does not shrink from abolishing statutes that have risen in disallowance of the original ordinances of God. Jesus is the pattern of the Perfect Life; and therefore, acts in manifest conflict with His express injunctions and spirit must certainly be classed as immoral. Deborah's song over Jael's treachery is patriotic, but it cannot be considered Christian. The slaughter of the Canaanites and other like acts admit of some excuse, and even

bears it. They meant only that the words were Davidic in character, and that it was appropriate that they should be included in the Temple Psalter, which bore David's name, because he was one of the first and largest contributors to its contents."—*Cf.* Psalm cxxxvii, in the version of the LXX.

Aid in settling the controversy concerning the authorship of the Psalms cannot be derived from the circumstance that Jesus cites passages from the Old Testament, and refers them to David. For it is obvious that the point in the mind of our Lord was not the critical question of Davidic or other authorship; nor was it His purpose to supply the criteria for determining the origin of the Psalm he cited, but solely to force his opponents to a fair and just use of their own principles, so that they might be driven to the conclusions those principles involved.—*Cf.* Gore, *Lux Mundi*, p. 264. Principal Rainy agrees with Canon Gore in the reasons he adduces for thinking that in general "our Lord did not mean to decide questions of authorship and literary character."—See *Critical Review*, II., 118.

of a certain kind of defence*; but it must be confessed that they fall far short of the ethical standard given by Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead. The outbursts of unrestrained hate in the imprecatory Psalms may have been natural to a suffering and afflicted people, but, judged by the words and spirit of Him who said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you," they can only be regarded as wrong.†

In like manner the conception of God does not maintain the same height and clearness in all the books of the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes falls far short of the twenty-third and one hundred and third Psalms. In the first you have a pulseless, hard, and mechanical Deism; in the second the singer obtains glimpses of the soft and tender light that shines from the face of Jesus Christ.

In fact, such imperfection and error ought to be expected. The Old Testament is the record of the life of Israel, that is, of the activities of God in a frail, erring, and sinful people; and whilst full of God and His Inspiration, it bears traces of the

* It is claimed that the words, "Thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth," are God's words, and it is argued that if they are God's words they are right, and if they are not God's words the Bible is false and there is no "*tertium quid*." But surely that does not end the controversy. Regard the Bible as a *record* of the Divine training of an imperfect people, and of their crude conceptions of His Will, and you secure an interpretation fair to the whole facts, neither derogatory to God nor the Bible, and elucidatory of the graded Revelation of the purposes of God to men. It is the "evolutionary idea" of the Bible that offers the true and sufficient *tertium quid*.

† See *The Morality of the Old Testament*, by Dr. Newman Smyth.

weakness, confusion of thought, imperfection, and growth of that elect people.* Barnabas was "a son of consolation," and "full of the Holy Ghost," but he was carried away with the dissimulation of Peter. Therefore we re-assert the Reformation doctrine that the seat of authority in Christian ethics and teaching is not in the letter of the Scriptures alone, but in Christ Jesus, dwelling and ruling in the conscience and reason of the Christian man by and through the Scriptures. We cannot suffer the Redeemer to be deposed from His throne in favour of the later and post-Reformation dogma, which lifts the letter of Scripture into the position of absolute inerrancy claimed for the Pope.† "Man," says Vinet, "soon wearies of living at his best." He is the child of the senses, and it is difficult for him to give free sway to the mind of the spirit. Refusing to estimate aright the qualities and forces of the regenerate soul, he is distrustful of the Spirit of Christ, yearns for a visible authority, yields to it, and is thereby robbed of his freedom, betrayed into mistake, and in danger of death. The rule of the letter is external and of the sense; that of the Spirit of Christ is inward, a life wrought in man and perfected by the Holy Ghost; the first, however modified in statement, is in essence, the doctrine of the Papacy; the second is the teaching of Luther and Paul; the first is rationalism, be it never so "orthodox;" the second is spiritual, and involves the union of the soul of man with God.

* See an exposition of this subject in *The Bible an Outgrowth of Theocratic Life*, by Professor D. W. Simon.

† Dr. Ladd's *Doctrine of Scripture*. Vol. II., C. v., p. 152 seq.

through Christ. "With freedom did Christ set us free. Stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

(3) Before all things, "the one thing needful" to be remembered is that the chief use of the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, is for the growth and nourishment of the spiritual life, the building of a Divine manhood. Jesus grew in wisdom and in favour with God and man by these very Scriptures. They helped to make Him. He so incorporated them with His life that He could use them freely, promptly, and decisively where He wanted and as He wanted ; now as a sword warding off the blow of an enemy, now as a rebuke warning a controversialist, now as material for sermons, and always as inspiration and nourishment for His life with the Father and for men. "Even His beatitudes," says Beecher, "are Old Testament bells which He has grouped into a sweet chime." The prayer that He gives us and that appropriates His name as its own, expresses in a lovely and portable form some of the finer teachings of Hebrew prophets and psalmists, while several of His parabolic paintings owe both their conception and colouring to the suggestions He appropriated from the Book which was the companion of His boyhood and youth, and the servant of His maturer life. Never forget that this is the first and highest use of our Scriptures. Like Christ, they are come that we may have life, and that we may have it abundantly. Debate we may, and some of us must ; but everyone should hide the Word in his heart that he may not

sin against God and man with his lips. Treat the Bible as literature—we may and ought; but our chief business is to meditate on its teachings, rule our thinking by its ideas, govern our lives by its rules, and breathe its redeeming spirit. Thus will they prove themselves “able to make us wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

O Saviour and Teacher of men, breathe upon us Thy pure and true Spirit, fill us with Thy love of truth and of souls, open our eyes to see in the words spoken by men moved of the Holy Ghost the wonders Thou didst behold, and keep us always loyal to Thee ; for

“To love Thee, Saviour, is to be
Cheerful and brave and strong and free ;
Calm as a rock 'mid striving seas,
Certain 'mid all uncertainties.”

NOTE A.

How the Apostles treated the Old Testament.—These conclusions are incalculably strengthened by investigating the treatment of the Old Testament pursued by Paul and Peter, James and John. These men were the pupils of the Spirit, and in their use of the Hebrew writings imitated the deep reverence and bold freedom of their Divine Master, seeking ever to obtain the substantial meaning and living Spirit of the Record, without being in bondage to its form and letter.

NOTE B.

The References made by Christ to the Psalms.—The criticism passed upon the position taken up by Canon Gore, as expressed in footnote to page 135, has not changed his view ; for in his recent *Dissertations on subjects connected with the Incarnation*, he says : “ It is not enough for example to recognize that our Lord was ignorant of the Divine secret of the day and hour of the end, in respect of His human nature, unless we recognize also that He was so truly living under human conditions as Himself to be ignorant. The Son Himself, as He reveals Himself to men in manhood, did not know.” p. 97. And

again, "The supernatural does not annihilate and supersede the natural. This is the principle of the Incarnation. This is the principle which the development of Biblical criticism is forcing us to reassert in the region of the doctrine of Inspiration, when it means that the supernatural action of the Holy Ghost does not destroy the natural processes of literary development. In the application, again, of Christianity to the sanctifying of human character we are for ever bound to insist that the human character in its most fundamental nature is meant to be developed, not overthrown, by supernatural grace. Finally, all that science has gone to teach us about the Divine action in creation compels us to emphasize the same principle—the respect which God pays to the natural substances which express His own will in creation, and are sustained by His own immanence." pp. 285, 286.

NOTE C.

The Bible the Book of a Race.—"The critical and sifting spirit of an age of research has thus set us free to understand the most important book that ever was written The spiritual unity of a message need be no longer hidden by the outward unity of a book. In seeing that the most opposite lines of narrative may be discovered to be convergent radii leading us to a single centre we learn to apprehend the true inspiration of Israel. . . . The history of Israel is a biography in a sense that no other history is. No other race approaches so closely to the unity of an individual, none other has left on the ear of humanity so definite an impression of a single voice."—*The Message of Israel*, Julia Wedgwood, 20-21.

IX.

THE SERVICE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE MAKING OF MEN.

"Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."—2 TIMOTHY iii., 16.

I PURPOSE showing in what ways the Old Testament, of which Paul is exclusively speaking in these words to and about Timothy, was as a *book*, or *collection of books*,* a channel or vehicle of Divine life and power to the Hebrew people; teaching them in their successive generations eternal religious truth; generating invincible convictions of duty towards God and men, women and children, aliens from, and members of the commonwealth of Israel; exhibiting and correcting defects of character; and inspiring ceaseless and patient drill in the practice of righteousness as it is in God, and may, by His all-sufficing grace, be in man, His child.

Regarded simply as a growing body of literature which appears at first in imperishable fragments of exceptional merit, it is then circulated as brief tracts, graphic histories, lyrical hymn books, devout prayer

* The first title given to the Bible in the West was *Bibliotheca Divina*, or Divine Library.

books, and inspiring oracles ; and, finally, becomes compacted into one unique and unrivalled volume ; these Scriptures, full of the quickening breath of God, formed one of the most effective and distinguished instruments for directing the spiritual life and fashioning the national and social order of the Children of Abraham ; a chief “means” of securing “*strength according to their day* ;” and advancing through a pure, joyous, and strong religion, the redemption and regeneration of humanity.

“Salvation is of the Jews”—first and foremost through the Jewish Christ ; and next, and with only inferior efficacy, through the Jews’ Bible.

(1) In the grey dawn of the world God *spake* to our fathers by the prophets : and His voice was a Revelation. “God spake these words and said,” not only what He wanted men to be and do, but also and chiefly what *He* was, and is, and will be. The Word disclosed the being, made manifest the spirit and purpose, the ideas and character of the Eternal, and so furnished self-evidencing religious truth, searching men’s souls as a Divine flame ; gave a nourishing and inspiring religious ideal, at once satisfying the heart and impelling the will ; and guaranteed grace available and sufficient for pardon and peace and purity.*

(2) But the mediation of human language is not

* “It is not the Bible only and the true religion taught by it that knows something of a Revelation of Divine words for men ; all historical religions, without exception, proceed from such a basis.” Ewald, *Revelation : its Nature and Record*, p. 1.

enough to satisfy the yearning of God for fellowship with His creature, man. The living God "did," as well as "said;" and His "words" were only a part of, and accessory to, His redeeming action. His dealings with men are *personal*, soul with soul, and His deeds became incorporate with the lives of men, part of their actual experience, woven into their individual and national histories, thereby adding ineffable wealth to the mysterious heritage to which every man is born, and enlarging the vast stores of spiritual influence which greet every son of God at his advent to this troubled sphere.

(3) Nor was this all. "Kind words," pure, true words, we say with the authority of fact as well as of a poetic licence, "can never die." They abide in the beauty of the lives they enrich, the sweetness of the emotions they create, the strength of will they influence, and "the loveliness of perfect deeds, more strong than all poetic thought," they inspire. But words, as *words*, must be caught by the attentive ear, and fixed in the retentive memory, and repeated from lip to ear, through the circling ages, or seized and held by the swift pen of the ready writer, or handed over to the securer custody of printer's type, in order that they may continue their mission of enlightening and gladdening the lives of men. Books perpetuate speech, give an abiding presence to the fleeting message, and form a magic wand by which the "dead but sceptred spirits still rule us from their urns." The literature of a people not only expresses and reports, reveals and registers, its inward life, its

conceptions of God and duty, its aspirations and failures, its faith and victory, but it also feeds and enriches that life, adds whole areas of thought and imagination to it, gives it wings to roam over the past and into the future, and illumines the chequered and chaotic present with the radiance of eternal law and inflexible principle. The Record multiplies the power of a Revelation a thousandfold!

Therefore, not only did God *speak* to the Hebrew fathers, but He also secured the preservation of His "words" and "deeds" from age to age; sometimes by cutting His commands with many a deep incision into the hard and enduring stone;* sometimes by the repetition of the sacred message from father to son, and to son's son;† sometimes by the express direction, "Write this in a book," either to supply the needs of the eager disciples of prophecy, or for the continuous instruction of the people generally in the ways of God;‡ sometimes by placarding religious manifestoes concerning public events on the walls of the city streets;§ and sometimes by the publication of oracles formerly delivered in public, or issued for the first time, reporting what the prophet had seen and heard and felt, as he was stirred and moved by the Holy Ghost. Thus the Old Testament grew from its

* Exodus xxiv., 4, 12. † Deuteronomy vi., 4-9. ‡ Isaiah viii., 16.

§ Isaiah viii., 1—R.V., reads "tablet" instead of "roll." The message was written in large letters on a tablet, or large "poster," to catch the eye of the wayfarer. Cheyne suggests that the tablet was probably made of wood, polished with wax, and, he adds, it was to be set up in public. It was the prophet-statesman's message on the political occurrences of the day.

|| Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, &c.

original germ little by little, bit by bit, until it became in its latest form the Great Hebrew Library, the matchless world-storehouse of the literary masterpieces of a Divinely-inspired community, concerning its God-given laws, its God-revealing historical annals, its God-adoring psalms and hymns, elegy and lyric, idyll and drama, its God-serving priestly lore, its fine, peerless, practical wisdom, and its rich, chastened, fervid and far-reaching prophecy.

The *Law* came by Moses, and by Moses it was preserved. I need not say he did not write all the five books that bear his name. That appears on the face of the Record, as well as in the fragments of the world's earliest literature, gathered from the work of the "holy prophets, who have been since the world began;";* but it is evident the living and eternal elements of the Pentateuch are mainly Mosaic, and its "Ten Words" form "the granite substratum of the whole Bible." Joshua, the minister of and successor to Moses, enlarges the revealed store, and adds to "the Book of the law of the Lord."† References to the lost book of *Jasher*, and "the book of the wars of the Lord," indicate the service of various anonymous authors in the growth of Revelation.‡ Samuel, the pupil of Eli, was himself a trainer of men, and the founder of the school of the prophets, and it is not unlikely that he placed the Mosaic

* Luke i., 70.

† Joshua xxiv., 26-28.

‡ Joshua x., 13; 2 Samuel i., 18; Numbers xxi., 14. The book of *Jasher* is said by an ever-inventive tradition to have perished in the days of the Captivity, but Dr. Donaldson has attempted to reconstruct it out of the contents of our Bible.

literature in the hands of his disciples in an enlarged form. That David enriched it by the gift of song, and Solomon by his wise sayings, is well known—a school of singers starting from the impulse of the first, and finally supplying the *Five Books of Psalms*; and a school of meditative philosophers from the second, producing the Book of *Job*, the collection of *Proverbs*, the colloquies of *Ecclesiastes*, and the love strains of the *Canticles*.* But it is to “the glorious company of the prophets,” to Joel and Hosea, Amos and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and their inspired comrades and successors, we owe the largest and richest developments of the Holy Book. Next to them in serviceableness comes the work of that great Bible editor, Ezra, “the Scribe,” “prepared to study the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach it in Israel,”† and who not only led the way in religious reform after the Exile, but gathered together, arranged, and completed the body of Revelation up to his date. Finally, the voice of the prophets having ceased, and the bonds of religious unity in Israel being all put out of sight, the last sayings of the prophets were added to those of the first, the songs of the inspired poets were put into five books, and the Old Scripture reached the form of which Paul said, it was “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction

* Speaking of the “Wisdom Literature” of the Hebrews, Ewald says, “It first manifested itself in special circles of the people, while in the age after Solomon, which was peculiarly favourable to it, eagerly inquisitive scholars gathered around individual masters, until ever-increasing schools were formed.” Quoted by Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, Vol. I., p. 40.

† Ezra vii., 10.

which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.”*

It is a long story of Divine growth, and, alas! for us, we know very little about it. Here and there we see a book, as it were, growing in a prophet’s mind, and can trace the successive stages of its development; but, for the most part, the Divine seed “grows secretly,” and comes to its harvest “without observation.” Yet we know enough to forbid our thinking and reasoning as though our Old Testament had been shot out of one of the bookseller’s shops in Paternoster Row yesterday morning, full and complete from the first and for evermore! More than fifteen hundred years that Book was growing. More than thirty different workers contributed to this unfolding of the Divine mind! More than half-a-dozen different “editions,” to speak in the current speech of the day, appeared! And oh! what would not we give for a glimpse of the actual roll put into the hands of young Samuel? How the heart would leap to see the Davidic edition of “the law of the Lord” about which he sang with such glowing rapture! What an epoch would be made if we could come upon the veritable “copy” that Ezra read when he stood in his pulpit of wood! What student of religion would not experience a new rapture at the sight of the Bible of the Maccabees? John Ruskin, speaking to the students at Oxford,

* “The Exile, which robbed Israel of every other inheritance, gave increased value and authority to the written Word.” *Ency. Brit.* Art. Hebrew Language and Literature. Cf. Plumptre, *Biblical Essays*, 259, *et seq.* Prof. Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 55, 158-167.

said, as he lifted a scrap of paper, "I show you a leaf of the Bible which your own King Alfred saw with his own bright eyes and from which he learned his childlike faith in the days of dawning thought ;" * would there not be an unwonted sacredness about a leaf of the actual Scriptures used by Mary in teaching the Holy Child Jesus the law of God? And should we not find a quickened interest as we gazed on those "sacred writings" from which Timothy, under the guidance of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, learned "those things which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus?"

(4) But though we know nothing of these successive editions of the Hebrew Scripture, we are sure of this, that as a *Book*, not merely as Revelation, in its written and literary form as a Record, and not only in its original Inspiration by the Holy Spirit, it has been one of the main channels of Divine force, and accomplished an entirely unique mission in the education and regeneration of men. From the very first, and in its earliest stages of growth, it was essentially reproductive. The earlier seeds of Revelation aided in the growth and fruitage of the later. Books make books. There is a continuity in the life of literature, and a genealogy of the books of the Bible. Malachi is indebted to Moses, Joel lives in Zechariah and in Peter, Habakkuk reappears in Paul, James alludes to Job, Jeremiah appropriates the sayings of Isaiah, and the productive mind of the son

**The Pleasures of England*, p. 148.

of Amoz is fertilized by his seniors. John, of the Apocalypse, dips his brush in the colours of Daniel and Ezekiel. Hosea is a father amongst the prophets. Elisha rejoices in his descent from Elijah. The New Testament, as every one knows, is rich in allusion to, and quotations from, the Old, and the latest books of the Hebrew Library draw largely from the earlier. The prophets of God grew strong by fellowship with one another through the records of the Divine dealings with Israel.

Little vainglorious souls are afraid of citing the works of others, lest somebody should presume to think they themselves are not absolutely original. Really capable minds, instead of shrinking from quotation, delight in it. One who is rarely, if ever, surpassed in the beauty and finish of his style, or the fineness of his thought, says, "the greatest is he who has been oftenest aided," and Ruskin's own works are sown with allusions and quotations like the sky with stars. Another, who, in my judgment, is the freshest and most suggestive thinker this century has seen, has, according to his biographer, nearly four thousand allusions to, or quotations from, eight hundred and sixty-eight different individuals, and that biographer says, "All minds quote. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote."*

Few writers show their self-abnegation and dependence upon one another more than the authors of the

* *Emerson*, by O. W. Holmes, p. 384.

Old Testament. Take a single instance. No man surpasses Isaiah in splendour of genius, wealth of idea, brilliance of imagery, sublimity of eloquence, and grandeur of faith ; and yet he builds on the basis of Exodus and Deuteronomy, illuminates his teaching from the Psalms, inserts long passages from the earlier prophets, uses Hosea and Amos, his predecessors, takes the text of his latter-day vision from Micah the Morasthite, and makes such frequent references to *Job* as to suggest to one of our acuter critics that the actual sufferings of the Man of Uz furnished the materials for that dark-bright picture of the Man of Sorrows in the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah, which is the perennial charm of his book.*

Nor did the reproductive power of the Divine Word cease with Malachi in the prophecy of the Old Testament, or with John in the spiritual Gospel of the New. Wheresoever it has gone it has vindicated itself by its fruitfulness in unfolding the spiritual life and mental fertility of men, as the Word of God, which liveth and abideth and increaseth for ever. Like the river of Ezekiel it has given life to everything it has touched. Our own and other literatures owe their higher spiritual qualities to its presence,

* "Isaiah is as dependent on his less famous predecessors as a Marlowe or a Shakespeare."—Cheyne, *Isaiah* II., 217. For proof of the above statements as to Isaiah, see Cheyne's *Essay on the Parallelisms of Isaiah*; Cf. Bateson-Wright on *Job* for quotations from *Job*; and, indeed, recent expositions of the Old Testament books generally. For now-a-days no exposition of a Biblical book is complete that does not trace the relations of its ideas to preceding and subsequent literature.

It is one of the drawbacks of the Revised Version of the Old Testament that it has not set in ordinary quotation signs the citations with which the books abound.

and derive their quickening influence on *conduct* from its ideas and powers; and to this very hour it is at work amongst us, slowly but surely assimilating to its pure ethical spirit the best minds and the best books of the age.*

Here then, Bible-readers, is one of the truest uses to which we can put our sacred books. Shame on us! if we are content to repeat these words, to fling "odds and ends" of sentences about in debate, to draw our theological weapons from them as from an armoury of texts, and fail to keep in and before the world the continuity of *Inspiration* by "receiving with meekness the implanted Word which is able to save our souls," and to re-deliver and re-plant it with such consoling energy, sweet reasonableness, and convincing persuasiveness, that men shall feel it to be the very message of God. Shame on us! if it cannot be said, as of old, "The Word of the Lord grew and was multiplied." It is Divine seed. What is the harvest? Do the sorrowing find the promises of God exceeding sweet and precious as we repeat them, bathed with the fervours of our own experience? Are the hungry satisfied as with the Bread of Life when we distribute what the Master Himself has given to us? O! that the living Word may have free course, and be glorified in souls themselves made alive by Christ Jesus.

(5) For the object of the Old Testament, equally with the New, is to "admonish every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that every man may be

* Cf. *Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible*, by C. Wordsworth, Bishop of St. Andrew's.

presented perfect in, and according to, the pattern, Christ Jesus ;” to make a completely equipped spiritual manhood, a nature furnished with every force of intellect and heart, conscience and will, motive and impulse, aim and ideal, for every good work the whole course of human life may require. Complete manhood, perfectly and exhaustlessly adequate for the noblest and most beneficent living, is the final goal of every Scripture inspired of God.

(a) This is true of its fragments. The different parts of the record of Revelation are not like separate stones, which are of no use till placed in the society of their fellows, and crowned with the top-stone of the superstructure. Each one is a living seed, yielding its appropriate and perpetual harvests. The first words are not like the first works of a watch, valueless until the last parts of the mechanism are produced. Each is an incorruptible germ, developing organically from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, and from youth far beyond, in ever-enlarging harvests of moral manhood for the world.

True, the clearer and fuller the Revelation, the richer the manhood it produces. As the Bible grows the man grows. Moses is greater than Abraham. Samuel surpasses Samson. David towers far above the last of the judges. There is a splendour of holiness in Isaiah we do not see in the sweet singer of Israel. And Christ Jesus Himself, the Son of Man, is the greatest and perfectest of all.

Still, it was not necessary the edifice of Revelation should be finished before it was profitable for teaching, for correction, for reproof and instruction, which is in

righteousness. Indeed, its earlier forms were specially adapted to the earlier need, and each part, as it took its place on the shelves of the Hebrew Library, fulfilled its formative work in the moral life of the world.

Men sometimes talk as though the usefulness of a book depended on the number of its pages and the quantity of its contents. Professor Newman complained, some years ago, against our Bible, because it does not tell every father to what business or profession he should put his sons. For such infinite particulars, and detailed advices, we should require not a portable manual but a British Museum. Far wiser and truer is the principle enunciated by the orator Burke, when he says, "Reading, and much reading, is good. But the power of diversifying the matter infinitely in your own mind, and of applying it to every occasion that arises, is far better, so don't suppress the living force." Bulk is no test of educational power. The exalted moral position of the Hebrew people in the ancient world is proof abundant that a few simple, central, and fundamental ideas concerning God and duty, willingly received and widely applied, are unspeakably profitable for teaching, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be completely furnished for all good works.

But the most signal illustration of the unequalled serviceableness of the Old Book is in Him, Who, in the fiercest crisis of His experience, used it as His chief weapon in repelling His assailant, protecting His threatened purity, maintaining an attitude of complete self-suppression, and advancing forward in

His work as the Redeemer of the world and the Reformer and Recreator of Religion. Think of it ! He, the mightiest amongst the mighty, and the purest amongst the pure, builds up His strong, sinless, harmonious, conquering, and perfect character, by the aid of these Jewish writings. The strong Son of God, immortal love, nourishes His spotless and inimitable manhood with the sweet strains of David's harp, the plaintive songs of Asaph, the moral maxims of Solomon, the fore-gleams of a brightening and all-reconciling future shot from the serene and penetrating spirit of Isaiah, the pictures of the march of the world and the succession of empires painted by Daniel, and the revelations of Moses and Abraham. The first and chief of all the sons of men, the "Son of Man," the crown and flower of humanity, constructs and sustains His goodness, fosters His faith, perfects His obedience, and secures His victory over self and Satan, by the splendid support of these old-world tracts—this encyclopædia of Hebrew literature, which some of us are tempted to put aside as worn out, effete, and unrelated to our present necessities.

The Old Testament is a prime factor in the education of Jesus. Of Greek culture, as Renan himself says, He knew nothing. Whatever He was, and whatever He achieved, He was, and did, without the feeblest stimulus from that incomparable store of world-influence, the poetry and philosophy, eloquence and history, art and statesmanship, of Greece. Not Socrates, the moralist, but Samuel, the seer ; not Pericles, the orator and political leader, but Isaiah, the apostolic prophet ; not Phidias, the famous

sculptor, but David, the royal poet and true saint ; not Homer, the blind old muse, but Moses, the man of God, were the masters of the school in which the Son of Mary “advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.” The years of quiet study and tranquil meditation He passed under the peaceful direction of His thoughtful and sweet-spirited mother made Him so familiar with their ideas, and instinct with their spirit, and charged with their facts, that they were a vital part of His being ; their grand purpose He breathed ; their absolute faith in the future of humanity He felt ; their fine serenity and fulness of joy He possessed ; their revelation of the unity of all ages, and of all workers, of law and prophecy and psalm, of Moses and David and Daniel, He rejoiced in ; and, therefore, could gladly say, as He dedicated Himself to His redeeming work, “Lo ! I come : in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O God ;” and Paul, gazing back on His peerless beauty and measureless service to men, could cite Him as the unique “Man of God, furnished completely unto every good work.”

Nor was this literary worker discharged from service with the arrival of the fuller and clearer Christian Revelation ! Discharged ! It was the most effective instrument in the Christian propaganda. It had gone everywhere preparing the way. The dispersion of the Jews was the distribution of the Scriptures, and accomplished for the world at the advent of Christ what the organization of the British and Foreign Bible Society has wrought for it in these later years. The student who sat at the feet of

Gamaliel, Timothy who was made wise to salvation, Cornelius at prayer in Cæsarea, are typical illustrations and verified prophecies of the widespread efficiency and continuous usefulness of the Old Testament in accelerating the progress of "the glorious Gospel of the happy God." Modern instances vie in interest with the ancient. The great Puritan Revival is due in no small degree to the baptism of the Elder Scripture. The Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland, in 1638, was fashioned on the pattern of Jewish proceedings in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. Calvin derived his Genevan legislation, not from the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul, but from Moses and the prophets. Savonarola drew his Inspiration for his noble and self-sacrificing reforms in Florence from the same exhaustlessly vital source.* And in the "Jewish Chronicle," of the first of May 1885, a writer says, "The holy writings have always been the centre of our spiritual life. New ideas and fresh incitements to virtue are ever drawn from the sacred text."

* "Not till a year later, 1484, did the thought take birth in him, which, fully worked out, furnished guidance for all his future life. Reading the Old Testament assiduously, and seeking to penetrate its hidden meanings, there dawned upon him the vision of a conformity between the history of Israel and of Florence. Surely the ages of wickedness, which had brought forth prophets, had their counterpart in his own times; and, since the Divine power was unchanging, the Divine voice might make itself heard. So, when a vision appeared to him, he was ready to set it down to the inspiration of God. The revelation which thus visited his dreams portrayed the calamities which should befall the corrupt Church, and the reform which was to follow, while a voice commanded him to go and preach these things to the people."—Ellen Watson, G. A. Buckland, 235.

(b) But its influence as a Book has not only been manifested in the nurture of noble and kingly spirits, the elect souls of all ages, but also, and signally, in the establishment of a national fellowship, a real brotherhood of interest and aspiration, of sentiment and service. The Jews owe their indestructible vitality and unity as a people,* not to purity of race—that is a figment that ought to be suffered to perish ; not simply to persecution, though that has fused them together ; but to the Divine magnetism of their Revelation. Losing their visible bond of cohesion, the land of their fathers, and being without king and without temple, and without sacrificing priest, the Divine Book has been the one central magnet holding the particles of Judaism together, though scattered all over the world. In its God, every Jew has found a common dwelling-place, in its hopes a solace, in its ethics the guide of his life, in its songs his inspiration, and in its prayers the language of devotion. It has been the standard for which all would fight, the *Magna Charta* which rallied all hearts, the fuel keeping alive faith in the invisible God, and glowing fellowship with one another.

The growth and perfecting of this Hebrew unity through an overflowing and glorious passion for the law of God, shine out with arresting brilliance in the later contributions to the Old Testament. Song after song beats and throbs with the intensest affection for the Revelation of God. Prayer follows prayer, soaring on the wings of faith and hope to the Great Revealer.

* Cf. Renan. *Le Judaïsme comme Race et comme Religion.*

"Oh, how love I Thy law," exclaims an enraptured soul in an outburst of enthusiasm, while another pathetically pleads, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold the wonders of Thy law." Affectionate labour and willing toil could scarcely go further in pleased ingenuity and accumulated device than they do in the curiously wrought One hundred and nineteenth Psalm, wherein the statutes and judgments, precepts and teachings of the law of the Lord are made the occasion of celebrating the glorious consolation and infinite fruitfulness of Holy Scripture. Yes, we Christians and Jews, as well as Christians and Christians, shall get to unity in our religious life in the degree in which we are filled and fired with this all-swaying passion for the truth of God, breathe the spirit of our *whole* Revelation, feel the absolute unity of the law that came by Moses with the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, and dedicate ourselves, first and mainly, body, soul and spirit, to complete equipment for every good work. Our miserable sectarianisms will be burned up in the fires of a love of the law of God. The barriers erected by the builders of mere opinion will have no place in the One Kingdom God has been building through all the generations. The long-desired, and long-since revealed brotherhood of men, as the enriched sons of the one living and Eternal God, will become the basis of our fellowship, and the inspiration and law of our behaviour. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the visible centre of human unity, the true bond of human fellowship, the great Charter of Human Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!

(c) Nor does the power of this ancient Book rest here; but its imperishable vitality is manifest in its efficiency as an agent of *religious revival*. Reformations in religion, both for individuals and peoples, have been coincident with the re-awakening and deepening of interest in the sacred Scriptures. As far back as the time of the reforming King Josiah, the re-discovery of the Roll of the law of the Lord is associated with a prodigious impact to the movement for a freshened presentation of religious truth, a purer worship, and a higher morality.* Ezra perfected and crowned his work of political and religious reform by the systematic reading, clear translation, and forcible interpretation of the Mosaic records to the people recently returned from captivity. Christianity itself starts into life amid the persistent and diligent efforts of the Jews to understand their sacred books. "Ye search the Scriptures," said Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life." Paul challenged the open-minded Bereans to the strenuous use of the most valid and satisfactory test of truth in existence, so that they might verify the claims of the Gospel he preached. The Greek mind laid hold of Christianity and influenced its development through Clement of Alexandria, and the learned Origen, the latter a student of Scripture, whose patience, energy, and devotion were only surpassed by the spiritual reproductive ness of his work.† Jerome led the way in the Western Church in a more thorough investigation of

* 2 Kings xxii., 8.

† Pressense's *Martyrs and Apologists of Christianity*, p. 305. Neander's *Church History*, III., 497, Bohn's Edition.

the Scripture, revised the existing Latin versions, sent out the *Vulgate*, and thereby nourished the life and enlarged the activities of the Church. Mediæval missions drew their breath from the inspiring Word, and found it, as we are still doing, the most capable instrument, next to the voice and heart of the living missionary. John Wycliffe laid the foundation of the Reformation in England on the basis of Revelation ; John Huss victoriously warred against Romanism with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ; Erasmus, exalted to the highest pinnacle of knowledge, opened the minds of the learned to the light of the New Testament ; and Martin Luther found in this “one Book” the living principle and abiding power for the greatest revolution of modern times.* So it has always been, and, therefore, standing as we do before a new era, with the *Revised Version* of both Testaments in our hands, we dare to forecast a near future in which more light will stream forth from God’s holy Word, a more vivid realization of its exhaustless wealth will be secured, fuller sway given to its radiant catholicity, and a wider application made of its redeeming and regenerating social principles.

(d) Time fails me to speak of the *Book* as the Divinely-ordered instrument of domestic education, the friend and guide of Hebrew childhood, the chief

* *The Bible in many Lands* says of the Syriac version of the Sacred Scriptures, “The multiplication of copies of the Word of God by the British and Foreign Bible Society was followed by the speedy substitution of vital godliness for a merely outward orthodoxy of profession.” The Bible is the true panacea for a corrupt Christianity, and the best bulwark of a holy religion.

building tool of the teacher of the young,* the shield and defence of personal purity, the inspiration to almsgiving and charity, and the creator of personal and national liberty. Let it suffice to affirm that the more fully the story of the doings of the Elder Scriptures in their book-form are known, the deeper will be our gratitude to their Creator, the more assiduous, individual, and thorough our effort, to get at their original and real meaning, the warmer our affection for their precious treasures, and the firmer our faith that "every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

(6) But, dear friends, I should be unfaithful to my knowledge of your difficulties and perplexities if I did not remember that this very Old Testament which has wrought so mightily for the welfare of humanity, and been to so many a schoolmaster leading to Christ, has become in these later days a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence, by the mistaken claims set up concerning its contents, and the false reading given of its character. As I am obliged to know from abundant sources, these Scriptures are to some a hindrance instead of a help, another difficulty in life to be solved, rather than a key to the solution of other problems; a source of confusion and mischief to Christianity instead of an explanation of its history

* Deuteronomy vi., 4-9; Psalm lxxviii., 1-6.

and an aid to its clearer apprehension and heartier practice.

"I can believe," it has been said to me, "in the New Testament, in its God of overflowing love and mercy, its superlative ethical idea, its unbroken unselfishness, its splendid ardour for purity of spirit, its total abolition of all mercetricious divisions between man and man, its energetic impact to good-doing, and its unashamed proclamation of the rights and privileges of the spirit of man ; but the Old Testament bewilders and appals me. You don't think I need accept it? Its 'ethics' are often low, sometimes base, and occasionally revolting ; its 'miracles' are trifling and unworthy ; its contradictions are glaring and amazing ; and its God is hard and harsh, confused and confusing, anger flashing from His eye, a sword glittering in His hand, doom on His lips, and a blind partiality for one race the mark of His rule. It is too much ; I cannot credit it."

In response to such frank and mistaken allegations much has to be said which I cannot now repeat ; but I will give four advices which I have tested again and again, and of whose solidity and value I have unimpeachable witness.

(a) Do not forget that whatever the Old Scripture is now, *it has done good work*. It made the first and finest manhood of the world ; and this it did as it is, and with all its present contents. The fact is not to be denied, and such signal utility ought not to be forgotten.

(b) *Treat the Hebrew Bible as Christ did.* He came to men at a time when the *Book* was idolized as the

pearl of great price, more precious than rubies, "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." The persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the fearful afflictions that followed, gave a special value to this possession, and forced it into the position of history and law-book, prayer-book and hymn-book, horn-book and worship-book, indeed, the one Book, the all and in all of the people. They copied it and re-copied it, counted its letters, protected its interpretation, and were the veriest bondsmen of its external form ; whilst its living spirit and its leading idea were far from them. It was a perilous time for a student of the Revelation of God, and in few points does Christ Jesus reveal His victorious sense and His keen insight more convincingly than in His attitude towards the Book that had helped to make Him, and was still His weapon against evil, His solace in sorrow, and His companion in service. He approached it with boundless reverence and love, but dealt with it freely and frankly, corrected and superseded its ethical teaching in details, showing that some of its provisions were transitory, and were due to "the hardness of men's hearts,"* and asserted the continuity of spiritual illumination and progress. He is silent concerning the Inspiration of every word the books contain ; never vouches for the literal infallibility of the sayings of Satan and Bildad, Zophar and Elihu ; could not, and did not, maintain the perfectness of the earlier morality of the Hebrews ; distinctly and vehemently rejects the Satanic literalism that treats the Bible as

* Matthew xix., 8. Cf. also Acts xvii., 30.

though it were made up of detached texts ; insists on the study of the *whole* drift and current of Revelation when He rebuts His adversary's shafts of citations with the words, "It is written again," and " AGAIN ;" and, finally, He fills in its outlines of truth, develops its germs, exemplifies its principles, and realizes in Himself its grand ideal. Meet the Old Testament in that spirit of profound reverence, warm affection, frank trust, and thorough-going practicality, and instead of being a binding fetter it will be an emancipating friend, and where it was a stone of stumbling it will be a mount where God is seen, and the seeing soul is transfigured.

(c) A fresh source of guidance opens to many of us in the attitude taken by the Apostles, at once to the Book they revered and loved, and to the Master they worshipped and served. Pervaded by His Spirit, they caught His practical methods of Biblical study, and held aloft not only the supreme ethical uses of the law and the prophets, but also the educational services they were capable of rendering to the Jewish pupils of Christianity. Not for a moment, however, did they sink the *Christ* below the *Book*, or exalt the letter above the Spirit. Not one of them so much as dreamt of saying, " Believe in the story of Creation and thou shalt be saved ; " " Believe in the universality of the Deluge or thou shalt be condemned ; " " Believe that the ass of Balaam spake with the voice of a man and thou shalt enter into life ; " " Believe that the axe-head swam in the river or without doubt thou shalt perish everlastinglly ; " " Believe in the matchless morality of Jael and find salvation ; " " Believe in the

immaculacy of every deed recorded and enjoined in Hebrew history, or thou shalt be lost." Such reasoning never came within the horizon of their thoughts, and their spirit and method are proof invincible that they would have resented the slightest approach to such "dominion over faith." It is the men of to-day who talk after that fashion, and, in effect, exalt human theory above Christ, and make the acceptance of dogmatic opinions the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostles proclaimed with one united voice "Christ, and Him crucified;" Christ, and Him exalted ; the life and hope of mankind. The substance of their message was, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Christ, and not a *book*, or worse still, a theory about a book, was the Alpha and Omega of their ministry.

Let us follow their order, for order is vital. Christ must have the precedence. Suppose I believe all miracle, accept the dogma of the mechanical infallibility of every word in the Bible ; a dogma which took the place of the older dogma of the infallibility of the Pope, and have not faith in and love for Christ, it profiteth me nothing. But if Christ himself has cast His gracious spell over me, and my heart yields to His infinite charms, then, indeed, will His good Spirit guide me into all truth, and open my eyes for everything contained in His law.

What, then ! Is not the Old Testament inspired ? Assuredly, and in every way, and to a degree that makes it unrivalled and unique in the religious literature of the world ! The whole Inspiration of the one God is here ; intellectual Inspiration, in its truth

and philosophy; imaginative Inspiration, in its poetry and song; ethical Inspiration, in its growing morality; religious and revealing Inspiration, in its manifestation of the eternal God and Father, Saviour and Sanctifier of men. But Inspiration is not and cannot be external and mechanical—a matter of parchments and pages, of letters and type; it is of the spirit and of the man, the work of the Holy God moving in the hearts of men.

Never, therefore, may we sanction the anti-apostolic method of insisting on the acceptance of a *theory* of the “*how*” of Inspiration as the portal to the Kingdom of Holy Scripture. That is a poor house, indeed, where the doorstep and the knocker are the best possessions they boast and the only inspiration they know. The real inspiration of the home is in the beauty of character of father and mother, son and daughter, mistress and servant, in their kindly consideration, broad sympathies, and wide interests. So we must feel the inspiration of the Bible as a *Book*, after we have felt the magnetic power of its supreme personalities, and chiefly *after* the Christ of both Testaments has been lifted up before us as the One Great Yearning of Humanity in the olden time, and the One Complete Satisfaction of Humanity in the later time, and so has drawn us to trust Himself; and then the ideas and principles and facts of Revelation fall into their true perspective, and are seen in their true relations, gradual unfolding, and final capability to illumine and save lost man. We may dwell on the doorsteps of theory for ever, and be starved. It is free and loving fellowship with the

Divine Host who sits and welcomes us into the many-mansioned home of Revelation that fills us with the fullest faith in the divinity of the edifice He has reared.*

(d) The fact is, we have injected our false fears and foolish misgivings and subtle unbelief into our

* It ought never to be forgotten that it is only in recent times the theory has gained ground which represents Inspiration as an *external* influence, infallibly guaranteeing man against confusion, error, and contradiction, and constituting the Bible from Genesis to Revelation not only the Word of God, but the actual, literal, and unerring Words of God and of no one else. This is a post-Reformation invention (*see Prof. Ladd's Doctrine of Scripture*, II., 182), and it is a heresy of measureless mischief. It is contradicted on the face of the Record; for the Bible contains the falsehoods of Satan as well as the truth of God; the glowing annals of martyrdom contradicting the diabolical assertion that "all that a man has will he give for his life" (Job ii., 4). It is asserted by the opponents of the Bible with suspicious iteration, R. Ingersoll saying, "It will not do to say that it is not verbally inspired. If the words are not inspired, what is?" And so on this baseless theory he proceeds to show, of course, that no Inspiration of any sort is possible or actual. Writers whose "orthodoxy" is as much beyond question as the extent of their learning, and the devoutness and reverence of their spirit, say, "The purely organic (that is, mechanical) theory of Inspiration rests on no Scriptural authority, and if we except a few ambiguous metaphors, is supported by no historical testimony. It is at variance with the whole form and fashion of the Bible, and it is destitute of all that is holiest in man and highest in religion."—Canon Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 5. "It is a secondary consideration, and a question on which we may safely agree to differ, whether every book of the Old Testament was written so completely under the dictation of God's Holy Spirit, that every word, not only doctrinal, but also historical and scientific, must be infallibly correct and true." The *Christian Religion*, by Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, p. 41. Cf. *The Theory of Inspiration; or, Why Men do not believe the Bible*, by Rev J. M. Wilson, M.A.

treatment of the Word of God. We have trembled for it as though it could not defend itself. We have defended it—a policy as necessary and as wise as elaborate defences of the sun when he is filling the earth with his golden beauty, and storing the granaries of the world with his harvests. The Bible asks no favour from anybody. If it is not the best Book for making manhood after the Divine pattern, then we *ought* to give it up for that which is better; fidelity to its teaching demands that we elect the Best. It stands or falls by its ethical values. It appeals to its moral and spiritual results. Try it by that test, and it is content. Try it fearlessly, boldly. Believe it to the extent you see and know it to be true. Follow it whithersoever it goes, and if it misleads you then give it up forthwith. Joseph Cook says, “Shut the door on inquiry, and doubt always comes in at the window. Let investigation proceed; let the Old Testament be examined as thoroughly as the New has been; let theories of development be applied to it as they have been to the New.”*

For myself, I am obliged to accept with greater heartiness every year I live the poetical and beautiful saying that “the Bible is the god of books.” All I can get to know of other literature only makes this matchless production more precious. Every glimpse I have had of the sacred Bibles of other peoples, of the Koran of the Mahomedans, of the Zendavesta of the Persians, of the Vedas of the Buddhists, of the King of the Chinese, only makes more manifest the unapproachable superiority of our Testaments in their

* *Boston Monday Lectures, Occident*, p. 99.

idea of God, fulness of Revelation, originality of statement of religious truth, fitness for universal man, victorious treatment of sin, and emphasis of the moral element in life and character. No Scripture gives such cogent proof that it is inspired of God to teach, reprove, correct, and completely equip men for being and doing good.

Following in the footsteps of Christ and the Apostles, the "difficulties of the Old Testament" lose their obstinate character, and gradually disappear altogether from the horizon of practical life. I am no longer surprised at the presence of a lower morality, a dim conception of God, and a confused apprehension of His messages, in the gradual and historical unfolding of the Divine Idea and Purpose *to* men, and *in* men, and *by* men. I expect them. The dim light of early morn is not the splendour of mid-day. Revelation is a progress, and it is only when Christ has come in "the fulness of time" that we are completely set free from the defects incident to all work touched by the spirit of man.

The urgent need is not for theory, but for practice; for the diligent and loving study of the Word. We read it too hurriedly, catch at its texts, and haste away to the busy world unaffected by their power. We want to sit, like an artist before a landscape, until the spell of its beauty is on us, and all its revelation suffuses us, and we ourselves, inspired by its ideas and principles and spirit, become living proofs of the everlastingly-inspiring power of the inspired Scripture.

O God of the Bible! Thou art our Father! Thou wilt be mindful of us. Thou art the *living* God! Speak to our hearts, we implore Thee! Fill us with Thy Spirit, that we may be led into the knowledge and practice of all Thy truth! AMEN.

NOTE A.

The Influence of the Bible.—“When we remember how vast the influence of this book has been; how it has corrected error; how it has controlled passion; how it has moulded thought; how it has anticipated periods of intellectual awakening in the nation; how it has bent over the cradle of genius; how it has held with firm, yet gentle hands, the impetuous aspiration of fancy; how it has enlarged the sphere of science, until exact thought has touched the boundaries of speculation, and the philosopher has discovered himself to be a poet; when we remember all this, it can scarcely excite in us any surprise that men have been tempted to offer to the book a homage which belongs of right only to the Author.”—*The History of the English Bible*, by Prof. T. Harwood Pattison, pp. 214, 215.

NOTE B.

The Need of the Bible as an instrument of Human Progress is finely sketched in the conclusion of Darmesteter's Essay on *The History of the Jews*.—“And when the nation who made the Bible shall have disappeared, the race and the cult, though leaving no visible trace of its passage upon earth, its imprint will remain in the depth of the heart of generations, who will unconsciously, perhaps, live upon what has thus been implanted in their breasts. Humanity, as it is fashioned in the dreams of those who desire to be called freethinkers, may with the lips deny the Bible and its work; but humanity can never deny it in its heart, without the sacrifice of the best that it contains, faith in unity and hope for justice, and without a relapse into the mythology and the ‘might makes right’ of thirty centuries ago.”—*Selected Essays of James Darmesteter*, translated by Helen B. Jastrow, p. 276.

X.

THE BEST DEFENCE OF THE BIBLE.

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the Sacred Writings, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—
2 TIMOTHY iii., 12-15.

THAT saying refers to the Old Testament mainly, if not only. The aged Paul, pressed in spirit by the growing evils of the time, and passionately eager for the steadfastness of his young friend Timothy, his son in the faith and comrade in service, bids him hold up, hold on, and hold out, though the days are dark, duties difficult, and responsibilities heavy. The darker the day, the more need for fortitude, heroic steadfastness, and "courage never to submit or yield ; and what else is not to be overcome." The man of God must not play the coward. All that will live godly must suffer persecution. You cannot do good work cheaply. The highest service is the most costly. Lofty ideals are only reached by a noble austerity, a strenuous war against the languors and pains born of defeat, a patient discipline and a sturdy obedience to Divinely-nourished conviction.

"Evil men and impostors wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," and therefore says Paul to Timothy : You must quit yourself like a man. Take your share of hardship without wincing, or, if you wince, without surrendering. Grip with resolute determination those convictions which are the main-stay of your soul and the means of your advancement. Abide in them ; they are part of the living tissue of your being. Recall your debt to those gentle souls who helped you to form them in your earliest childhood. Do not discredit their long and loving training in the ancient Scriptures. Endure afflictions heroically, as a man of God, fed by the hopes those writings inspire, and saved from weakness by the strength they impart. Show that man not only *lives* by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God ; but that he lives grandly, conqueringly, and eternally. The best defence of the Bible is a biblically-inspired life.

But why does Paul, in seeking to infuse courage and quicken hope, take Timothy back to his first religious text-book, and recall the beginnings of his spiritual education in and through the Hebrew Scriptures ? Is it likely Timothy had lost the feeling of a fresh and living interest in the familiar stories told him by his grandmother, Lois, and the songs sung by his mother, Eunice ? Had he come to think, I will not say slightly—that was impossible—but inadequately of the Old Testament, owing to the deep satisfactions and wonderful richness of the New Testament, in Christ Jesus, the Eternal Word ? Were the charms of ancient prophecy and proverb forgotten

as he lived under the irresistible fascinations of the newer and larger Revelation of God in Christ Jesus?

It is not improbable. Young men live in the future. To them the past is often dead. They feel the thrill of the "triumphant spring," rejoice in its infinite promise, and forget the "lorn autumns" and earth-cleansing winters of the world. They are in danger of neglecting an eternal truth because of its ancient form, despising a precious jewel because the casket is old, and refusing a good sword because the sheath is musty and old-fashioned. But we must abide in the things of whose truth we have been personally assured, the convictions concerning God and His Revelations that have grown from childhood into manhood, if we would not miss the signal advantage of a continuous and harmonious progress. The human spirit is a unity, and its growth is strong and enduring as it is unbroken. The old world needs the new, and the new colony must not forget the aged and experienced mother. There is wisdom for salvation in the words of Job and Isaiah, David and Jeremiah, although, yea, rather because God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.

Moreover, we must not forget that the young preacher and pastor was living in the city of Ephesus, with its magnificent and arrogant paganism, its ghastly spiritual degradation, its pathetic despisal of Christ and His Message, its crying need of pity and service, and therefore must have felt himself pulled by a thousand strings, and goaded by a thousand perils, to an exhausting expenditure of effort to save men from the ruin that threatened them. Absorbed

in his pastoral and social work, he might easily forget that he had to save *himself* from weakness of will, poorness of love, lowness of spirits, dimness of vision, and deadness of soul ; or else he would grow sick at heart as he looked from day to day on the evils about him, and become overwhelmed and oppressed by the monotony of sin. The very opulence of our opportunity is our snare ; and the painful sense of inadequacy that pursues us and often makes our work bitter, may induce neglect of the sources of our strength. It is difficult to keep the balance in our training and service. The real preparation for a task is within. It is the soul ; the man, the whole man ; and that is not a work for a few moments prior to a public service, but of the inward life, moment by moment, and hour by hour—and who is sufficient for these things? Sometimes we are well prepared in head but fail in heart, and our efforts lack tone, elevation, spiritual distinction. Again, we glow with feeling, throb with sympathy, but are barren of ideas, and our minds are filled with the gloom of a November fog. On another occasion heart is alert and mind awake, but the “flesh” is weakened by overstrain. So it comes to pass that our work will not bear thinking about, and our future fills us with alarm. We need spiritual renewal. We must remount to our *sources*. We must go into the desert place and rest awhile, so that we may hold speech with Him, and Him only Who searches and cleanses the heart by the fires of His truth. Therefore, Paul tells Timothy to recall his past, to pick up the dropped threads of his training, and assures him that the Scriptures he knows

so well are able to make him wise unto *salvation*, from all the perils of the pastor and preacher, teacher and leader, on the condition that he surrenders himself to Christ as the Master-Interpreter of the Scriptures, subjects himself to His will, and experiences by faith the power of His sacrifice and in-dwelling.

Lofty and positive as that claim is for what Paul calls the "*sacred literature*" of his race, it was easy for him to make it; for, after the prophets—who were *themselves* moved by the Holy Ghost—the Old Testament was the most important channel of Divine life and power to the Hebrew people, teaching them in their successive generations eternal religious truth, begetting invincible convictions of duty towards God and men, women and children, aliens from, and members of, the commonwealth of Israel, exhibiting and correcting defects of character, and inspiring ceaseless and patient courage in the practice of righteousness. Full of the quickening energy of God, these Scriptures formed the *second* most effective instrument for directing the spiritual life and fashioning the national and social order of the children of Abraham; a chief means of saving them from barbarism and paganism and death, and of advancing, through a purifying and gladdening religion, the redemption and regeneration of humanity. Somebody says, "Literature is man written." Then the Old Testament is the *Jew* written; but the Jew is the man of God's choice, the man of religion, to whom the search for God, the effort to know Him, and rest in Him, and serve and enjoy Him, was life itself. Therefore the Jews' literature is the history of God,

of the activity of God in self-communication, of God the Father seeking man, His child, *everywhere* and always, but finding him first in responsive faith and passionate yearning in Israel. By those Scriptures—next to the seers who wrote them—they had received whatever salvation from ignorance and sin, from idolatry and death they knew, and acquired their power as the religious teachers of the world, the messengers of the glad tidings of redemption to all men. The “making” of the greatest people of all the past was due in unspeakable degrees to these Scriptures.

Standing, then, in the presence of these facts, Paul makes this distinguished claim; but he makes it for the “Sacred literature” *itself*, and not for the “notes and comments,” the discussions and theories, the endless questions and ceaseless word-fights of the Jews, which abounded in their literature concerning the Bible. He knew that the saving power was in the *Revelation of God*, in the eternally fructifying idea of Him and His work it contained; that was “the Seed which liveth and abideth for ever.” God had said, “My Word shall not return to Me void.” It only is able to make wise unto salvation. Our new chemistries and new geologies stimulate enquiry, enlarge knowledge, and may help the farmer in arranging the rotation of his crops and suiting them to specific conditions of soil; but it is upon old Mother Earth herself, enriched by the dews and sunshine and the all-investing air, we must depend for the harvests that nourish her ever-increasing family. So the new facts, new ideas, and new

methods of Biblical criticism and comparative religion may assist the teacher and make him wise in apprehending the way the Word of the Lord came at successive periods to men ; the service it rendered to those who first heard it ; the methods they took to secure it as a legacy of truth for all generations ; but for the *energies that make men wise to salvation* we must go straight to the Word itself, in its clear radiance, its absolute purity, its incorruptible simplicity. For it is the Word itself which is “ living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Back, therefore, to the Bible itself is the law of the Christian workers ; reading it over and over with perfectly unprejudiced mind ; accepting nothing as its teaching which it does not clearly teach ; giving to its facts, ideas, and forces that unhampered, sincere, sustained, and reverent study which the student of Science gives to Nature, and we shall experience and bring out for others the infinite efficacy and exhaustless quickening of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

“ *But on one indispensable condition,*” says Paul. What is that ? May we not go to the writings of psalmists and prophets without further ado ? No ! there is one universal law which must be obeyed ! Books have key ideas. Literature is spoken thought. Speech is the soul made vocal. You must know the soul of a book to get at its power, know it not only intellectually and as an objective, but sympathetically,

with your own soul, through actual identification, of your own feeling and purpose and aim, *i.e.*, through a faith which carries you out of yourself and brings you into vital fellowship with the author. Now the Soul of the Scriptures, Old and New alike, is Jesus. To Him give all the prophets witness. He incarnates the idea that fills the ancient Revelation. His outline runs like a golden thread through the brilliant and beautiful tapestry of Hebrew literature until we see the Divine Figure itself before us in the Gospels. His star—the Star of Redemption, shining now dimly and now with brilliance, out of the obscurities and hopes, the faiths and labours, the institutions and events, oracles and poems, battles and marches of forty centuries—ascends at last into the heavens, and, as the Sun of Righteousness, floods the world with healing and salvation. In a deep and wide sense the Old Testament is prophecy, and Christ is present all through in *idea*; the Four Evangelists are history, and Christ is present in visible *fact*; the Acts and Epistles are active progress, and Christ is present in *power*, as the Redeemer of man and the Creator of the new society. Even the unmoral and the immoral events recorded in the Old Testament are signs of that awful tragedy of sin which He only can repair. The Gospels are as the Baptist saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;” and the Epistles and Apocalypse show the men who were “idolaters, fornicators, thieves, covetous, drunkards and revilers; but who are now washed and sanctified and justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.” The older Scripture

is the preface and title of which Christ in the newer writing is the many-paged and many-chaptered volume—not yet complete. That contains the plan of which He is the fulfilment. It is the springtide, of which He is the beautiful and glorious summer.

I do not mean to say that the Old Testament has no value apart from the historical Jesus, and that a Jew may not be warned and corrected, and instructed in righteousness thereby. Far from it. But this is certain, that men fed and nourished on the law and the prophets, and on them only, will remain children of Israel still ; and the work of God in the education of the world for the last nineteen centuries will only reach them in a very enfeebled and ineffective way.* It is Christ who gives universal meaning to the contents, and sanctifying power to the truths and hopes, and triumphant energy to the redemptive idea of the Old Testament. He is the Light of the Word as well as of the world ; and even the Jew will only reach his ideal through that greatest Jew, Christ Jesus. The Scriptures are able to make men wise to salvation ; but it is through faith which is in Him.

But Paul's claim for these writings of the earlier and later times goes higher still. Their efficacy is not restricted to the way of life ; it extends to the way of work. It is not bounded by help for the peace and joy of salvation, but reaches to the perfect

* This conclusion is vindicated in a pathetic way by a volume of sermons of special and deep interest, and of much ability, entitled *Aspects of Judaism*, by Israel Abrahams and Claude G. Montefiore. For one misses in these discourses the glowing enthusiasm for the service of man, inspired by Christ in the thousands over whom He has, from generation to generation, cast His personal spell.

service into which salvation develops. It makes wise for the attainment of the noble and symmetrical manhood that service requires, and for the patience and courage, hope and enthusiasm, faith and zeal such work demands. They "are able to make thee"—*the man Timothy*, the preacher, the pastor, the Church leader, the inspired worker—to make thee wise unto salvation from all the risks and losses incident to such an office and work, and to all the strength and efficiency the vocation needs. *They make wise the elect spirits* of the world. They aid the choice men, who live not for themselves but for others, whose aims are high, passions pure, and spirits exalted and service unflagging. They were an important factor in the making of Christ : they are still an important ministry to His servants and followers.

Of course, they are able to make *all* men wise for all that salvation includes and salvation—could we only wake up enough to sound the depths of its meaning—is the most comprehensive word our Scriptures know, save that which names Him from whom the Scriptures and the salvation alike proceed. With what power the Bible searches the soul and convinces of sin, righteousness and judgment! How it reveals the secret evil of the heart and quickens the cry of repentance, "God be merciful to me the sinner!" But, thanks be to God, that sense of personal responsibility for sin is not suffered to crush the soul with despair, for the redeeming love and reconciling grace of God in Christ are also revealed, and peace with God through faith in the Saviour flows as a river, and righteousness as the waves of the sea.

But the chief distinction of the efficacious working of the Bible is its service to the man of God, to the Timothys working for the salvation of the world, to the missionary Paul and the crusading Knox, to the gentle and loving John and the bold Martin Luther; to heroic path-finders like Carey and Wilberforce, Moffat and Knibb, and to the hosts of pastors and teachers, prophets and evangelists of the Christian centuries. Chrysostom says: "He who knows the Scriptures as a man ought to know them is offended at nothing that befalls him, but bears all things with a noble endurance." From them "he gets the true canons and standards of judgment." He sees that "virtue is good, that vice is evil, that sickness, poverty, persecution, and the like are things indifferent; that the righteous pass through much tribulation in this world; that the works of God are past finding out, and that no words can tell the difference between His ways and ours." So the teacher and worker is made wise unto salvation from false and misleading judgments, clouded vision, warping prejudices, traditional errors, and enabled to look brightly at life and duty, seeing its meaning as God does, and judging its contents according to the Divine scale which is presented in the Word. Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by His Gospel. Christ has abolished the darkness that brooded over human sin and sorrow, and shown how God makes an end of the sin, and uses the "sorrow," as Dante says, "to re-marry us to God." Christ has abolished the temporal by lifting all life and experience into that

eternal and heavenly order of which He has by His grace made us free members. Therefore, to dwell in that Revelation is to dwell in light, to see clearly, to work purely and strongly, and escape the mists and errors that cloud and bewilder men who occupy the lower realms of sense and selfishness. Serene fearlessness in the service of man is fed and nourished by the Word of the ever-living God.

Moreover, abiding in the things of the Scriptures saves the teacher and worker from that perennial snare, Unreality, and the perfunctory and mechanical discharge of duty. The Bible is intensely real. It glows and throbs with life. It demands sincerity. It insists on soul. It inspires. It creates manhood. Carlyle says : "The Bible has in all changes of theory about it, this as its highest distinction, that it is the truest of books—a Book springing, every word of it, from the intensest convictions, from the very hearts' core of those who wrote it." To abide in the study of it, to live in its capacious realms, is to breathe its spirit ; to hate pretence, formalities, and insincerity ; to love truth, and to be helped in being true and in speaking that Word we were created to proclaim. The truest souls have been the best workers for the world, and they have been nourished on the Bread of God, which came down from heaven. It has inspired the calm and serene, but severely strenuous life that sings :

" I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know ;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.

Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate ;
A work of lowly love to do
For Him on whom I wait.

I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none that ask denied,
A mind to blend with outward life,
While keeping at Thy side ;
Content to fill a little space,
If Thou be glorified.

Briars beset our every path,
Which call for patient care ;
There is a cross in every lot,
And earnest need for prayer :
But lowly hearts that lean on Thee
Are happy anywhere.

In service which Thy Will appoints
There are no bonds for me ;
My inmost heart is taught 'the truth,
That makes Thy children 'free :'
A life of self-renouncing love,
Is a life of liberty."

There are hints in these letters that the Scriptures might render Timothy the further aid of making him wise unto salvation, from the perils of passion and the tyranny of the lower nature. "Love your Bible," said Jerome, "and you will not love the vices of the flesh." "It is a simple historical fact," declares Archdeacon Wilson, "that among all nations and in all ages, belief in Christ alone has fought and mastered the sins of the flesh." The germs of evil are sterilized by the hot flames which burn in this bush of the Divine Revelation. Corruption is burnt out. "Youthful lusts" are vanquished by the aid of the Word, and

the stainless strength of self-mastering men is given with unstinted devotion to chivalrous defence of imperilled souls and bold attacks on the emissaries of evil. The heroes made by the Bible are the chief distinction of history.

The Bible has also helped spiritual leaders to resist the temptations to use worldly means of securing power, and to find content in the mere shows of success. The history of Scripture is one long Revelation of its infinite power of revival and recovery for men and Churches. Men lose the ardour and simplicity of their first love. With middle life, too often, there comes the dimming of the bright vision, the lowering of the aim, and satisfaction with paltry successes. As with men, so with Churches. They do not long retain their good fortune at its height. Corruption steals in, and power is gone. But the Scriptures are able to make men wise to save both themselves and the Churches. Josiah and Paul, Jerome and Origen, Wycliffe and Huss, Erasmus and Luther, are names associated with revivals and renewals effected by means of the fresh investigation of the Word of God. The Bible is the true panacea for a corrupt Christianity and the best Inspiration to a fresh and ever-progressive religion.

The Bishop of Durham says : " It is no exaggeration to say that each great movement for good in the Christian Church has coincided with fresh study of the Bible. It was so with the great fathers of the first ages, with Origen, and the masters of Alexandria ; it was so with Jerome and Augustine ; it was so in the Tenth, the Fourteenth, and the Sixteenth Centuries.

At each crisis deeper investigation of Scripture found new treasures which answered to the wants of a new society. And by God's help it will be so now. The power of the Bible is unchanged and inexhaustible. It speaks with authority to societies and to men ; it speaks with sympathy ; it speaks with authority because it speaks with sympathy ; because it speaks with a human voice, through men and to men, in many fashions and in many parts."

Timothy's greatest need was to be saved from despair, from the loss of faith in the final issues of his work and the ultimate triumph of Christianity. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have *hope*." The Bible is a sure antidote to despair. It is unconquerably optimistic. All things work together for good. Even tribulation works experience, and experience hope. The breadth, the patience, the long-suffering of the dealings of God in the past, with all its mysteries and sorrows, are shown in the Scripture working out human redemption and firing men with courageous hope as to the future of mankind. And of its fulness much-enduring men still partake, and are strong. "It stands before us a living monument of a Divine life. Its last message is not spoken. It is not as some would treat it, simply a priceless treasure. It is still the organ of the Divine Spirit, eloquent for us with fresh vital truth."^{*} Therefore let the Word of the Lord have free course. Translate it into every language on

* The Bishop of Durham in a speech for the Bible Society.

earth. Circulate it amongst all peoples. Let it be heard. Recall the achievements of the Reformation in the translation, criticism, and domestication of the Bible, and rejoice in the widespread endeavours to understand the whole story of our sacred books, to get at the actual meaning of their contents, to exhibit their fulness and Catholicity, and to carry their wealth to every man's door. Religion must gain—in purity, in strength, and in missionary passion. The Bible is its own best defender. Give it room, and it will rule and save. Its ideas are the predestined monarchs of the world. They magnetize. They knit together the souls of men in a mystical fellowship, and they regenerate and renew the societies they create, and set in motion great spiritual revolutions that march through the centuries clad with the strength and breathing the life of God. They made the elect people of Israel. They made the elect men, Paul and Augustine, Bernard and Luther, Cromwell and Baxter, Milton and Bunyan, Wesley and Raikes and Howard, Livingstone and Patteson and Paton, Hughes and Charles of Bala, and a mighty host of immortals whose works live on from age to age in reproductive fulness. They are making the noblest and most useful manhood of to-day. If a tree is known by its fruits, then no tree in all the fields of literature can equal the Bible. Its splendid service to the spiritual life of the world is its cogent and complete defence.

"The law of the Lord is perfect,
Restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure,
Making wise the simple;

The precepts of the Lord are right,
Rejoicing the heart ;
The commandment of the Lord is pure,
Eulogizing the eyes ;
The fear of the Lord is clean,
Enduring for ever ;
The judgments of the Lord are true
And righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold ;
Sweeter also than honey
And the honeycomb ;
Moreover by them is Thy servant warned :
In keeping of them there is great reward.”

NOTE A.

The Bible as a Builder of Character.—“The modern mind is especially drawn to the Old Testament by its portraiture of character, its ideals of social righteousness, its vision of history as the tribunal of God, its treatment of speculative questions, and its treatment of the prudential aspects of life—neither of which last two is treated by the New Testament in detail. Above all, it is the Old Testament’s inimitable portraiture of character upon which our great preachers have combined.

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“ We cannot over-estimate the effect which, at least till a recent date, the regular exposition of the Book of Proverbs, in church and school and home, has exercised upon the Scottish character.”—*The Preaching of the Old Testament to the Age*, pp. 26, 30, by Professor G. A. Smith.

NOTE B.

The Bible and Liberty.—“ Take the great succession of treatises, which form an almost complete history of the political ideal in Europe from Constantine to the period immediately before the French Revolution. Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*; Dante’s *De Monarchia*; the political tracts of the German Reformers; Milton’s *Defence of the People of England*: our own Buchanan’s *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*; Rutherford’s *Lex Rex*. By all of these the Old Testament is used; and by some used lavishly. It is a fact of great interest, that in the prodigious controversy between the

Divine Right of Kings and the Liberty of the People, the advocates of the former chiefly chose texts from the New Testament, while the champions of the people relied on the Old. Our own royalist divines used as their proof-texts for the sacredness of the Stuart House Pilate's words to Christ, *I have power to crucify or release thee*; Paul's, *The powers that be are ordained of God*; Peter's, *The King as supreme*. Whereas the Scriptures, which, after the fashion of the times, popular champions like Milton and Rutherford preferred against them, are all drawn from the Old Testament—from the narratives of the election of Saul and David, from the subjection of the kings to the covenant, as well as from many passages of the prophets. When we read chapter on chapter of such arguments, and remember that the Book from which they were drawn was already in the hands and hearts of the common people, we appreciate how much of the liberty, which these wonderful centuries secured to us, is due to the Old Testament."—*The Preaching of the Old Testament to the Age*, pp. 20 and 22, by Prof. George Adam Smith, M.A., D.D.

XI.

THE BATTLE OF THE SACRED BOOKS.

"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—ISAIAH xi., 9.

I. IT was in a day of peril and death the Seer beheld the uprising of the new shoot from the stock of Jesse, endued with an endless life, enriched with a fruitfulness slowly but surely increasing from age to age, and at length filling the whole world with its benefits.

The serried battalions of Assyria threatened the enfeebled people of Judah and Jerusalem with utter extinction. Zion mourned. Her sons and daughters trembled. Her statesmen were paralysed and her soldiers cowed. But to the vision of the prophet the gathered hosts were as the trees of a mighty forest, dried and waiting for the out-flashing of the Light of Israel which should consume them so completely that a child might count the remnant. And the ancient people of God, on whom the boastful Sennacherib was descending, "like a wolf on the fold," would give rise to One who would inaugurate a reign of peace and right—gentle in its strength, beautiful in its security, and universal in its range—so that the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters covered the sea.

The conditions are typical. God's prophets look with a firm and calm glance on the most difficult times and see the best issues when things are at their worst. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," is their message to troubled men who love God and seek His face. Isaiah's psalms are chanted in Judah's darkest days. The Fourteenth of John grows near, if not in, the Garden of Gethsemane. "Men learn in suffering what they teach in song." The literature that inspires and heals the world is the creation of "men of sorrow and acquainted with grief." The most pathetic strains are wafted from unsubduable souls through prison roofs. Out of the menaces of men come the promises of God. As

"Only a prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white,
So may a glory from defect arise."

II. Therefore, may I not say it is fortunate for us, who are charged with the task of preaching the Gospel of Jesus to every creature, that, whatever may have been possible to our predecessors, we can neither ignore the difficulties of our vocation nor disguise the weakness of our forces. The enormous strength of the gigantic religious and social systems of the world is disclosed to us as it never was to our fathers. We have surrendered the juvenile prejudice that the victories of Mahommedanism are all due to the sword, and that the sway of Islam over millions is only obtained by the assumption of a Divine sanction for immorality. We see that when

we are on the eve of the greatest missionary expansion of all time, the GREAT MISSIONARY BOOK—called by Renan “the Great Book of the consolation of Humanity”—is thrust into the burning fiery furnace of European criticism; and at a time when Literature offers to become one of the most effective agents in the distribution of ideas, and the transmission of moral forces, there is not only a growing distrust of the Scriptures, as the final Book for the Race, but the confidence of the younger men and women, in and about our Churches, in their integrity, uniqueness, and availability for all the practical needs of life, is placed in grave danger. The Sun of the Knowledge of the Lord is threatened with eclipse at the moment when we expected its beams to rise with healing over all the nations of the earth. “And so,” the Church may say with Browning—

“ I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer—still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man:
Not left in God’s contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life dead at heart.”

III. For we share the prophet’s hope, and are possessed and swayed by his invincible faith. The final issue is clear. The Word of the Lord will endure for ever. The Best must live. The Absolute Best will live longest. These Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are the ultimate form of the written Revelation of the Eternal Father to the Race, and therefore this Bible is destined to become the Sacred Book of Humanity. The earth shall be *full* of the knowledge

of the Lord. "It will come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's House—'the place of His special revealings'—shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and ALL nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law—'the instruction'—and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." We never dream that this marvellous story of the most marvellous religion will become superannuated, and men will cease to listen to the majestic music of its thrilling strains ; to feed on its nourishing and strengthening ideas ; to seek the inspiration and moral momentum of its principles ; to crave its clear and exalted maxims for conduct ; or to gaze on its full-orbed revelation of God the Father—suffering in Christ to save man, His child—forgiving iniquity, renewing the conviction of the supremacy of righteousness, bringing men into the love of Himself and of all men, and so creating a new heaven and a new earth. We have heard of the last of the worshippers of Odin, and even of the last of the Romans ; but we are sure men will never hear of the last of the Christians, or of the last student of the knowledge of the Lord contained in this Divine Library of the Hebrew people !

IV. But you will be ready to ask : On what does a faith like that stand ? Has it a basis in fact and

experience? Can it be defended by unbiassed reason and flawless logic?

I think it is Dean Stanley who insinuates that the Englishman's conviction that the Bible contains the ultimate form of the religion of man has reached us by the line of inheritance. We are the people of the Bible. It has made us. In it we live and move and have our being. We owe our rank amongst the nations to its expanding ideas and creative force. Our superiority is its gift, our conscious power its inspiration, and therefore we readily believe that the Book which has wrought in us so mightily and beneficially must play a supreme part in determining the life of all other peoples; and since we cannot think of our own defeat, so we are incapable of imagining that in the impending conflict of sacred literatures, that which has triumphed so conspicuously and so completely is doomed at last to fall.

I will not deny that in some cases this faith in the victory of the Book is only a consequence of our inherited expectation of the strength of the Anglo-Saxon race; but surely, for most of us, this is to set the facts in an order the reverse of experience. If we believe in the ascension of the Anglo-Saxon to primacy in the education of the world, it is because we also believe in the saving, cleansing, and life-multiplying power of the Book, and are sure that so long as we are men of this Book—illumined by its ideas, guided by its laws, and inspired by its missionary spirit—we cannot possibly fall into the rear of the most progressive nations. We have inherited its unquenchable hope, and accepted, as a certain reality,

its beautiful *Utopia*, a world regenerated by the knowledge of the Lord. The Psalmist's prayer is ours, "Let the people praise Thee, O God : let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. And ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH SHALL FEAR HIM." And we hear sounding in our ears, with all the freshness of a living command, the directions of the Christ: "Go ye into *all* the nations and preach the Gospel to *every creature*. Lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Our faith in the finality of the Revelation of God in Christ does not stand on the shifting impulses of patriotic enthusiasm, but on the peerless values of the Ideas and Facts God has given to us in His enduring Word !

V. "But," you remind me, "all that is on the point of being altered." Easy enough it was to accept the Hebrew hope when the Bible was the only sacred Book we knew, and to picture the Hindoo flinging his shastres into the Ganges, or the Chinaman preferring Christ to Confucius, so long as we were unacquainted with the character and quality of the teachings they had received from their illustrious predecessors. But that is not possible now ! We are living in the full radiance of the sacred literature of the wide earth. The "Light of Asia" shines into the far West. The ethical maxims of the Chinese sage are put into competition with the sayings of the Great Teacher of Syria. The sacred books of the East are translated into our own tongue and expounded to our own people. The Assyrian and Babylonian poets have

left evidence behind them that they were not strangers to the regions of spiritual devotion nor to the yearning for the forgiveness of sins and the passion for Divine companionship.* Scholarship and imagination, research and poetical genius, acquaint us with the treasures accumulated by the reverent and earnest souls of the ages, who have striven to find God, to understand His relations to and His ways with men, to obtain His favour, which is life, and His loving kindness, which is better than life. "Wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a little while some of us have been put to grief by manifold temptations, that the proof of our faith," in the Bible and in the God of the Bible, "being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"We rejoice," I say, in this modern discovery of the fellowship of hearts in thirst for the living God ! and welcome with unstinted delight the opportunity of access to the purest thoughts and aspirations of our brothers of the far back ages ! Fear the Science of Comparative Religion ! Why, you made it ! Your missionaries collected the facts, your scholars massed them in order, your philosophers have expounded their significance. Carey and Ward, Moffat and Duff, Livingstone and Patteson, Hardy and Legge, Bunsen and Max Müller, Williams and Sayce, have rendered possible these visions—from the housetop of our meditations—telling us to call nothing that concerns the soul of man common or unclean. God has not

* Cf. Cheyne's *Psalms* in the Parchment Library, Introduction VIII.

given us the spirit of *fear*. Christianity does not halt lest its advances should be creative of new difficulties. So strong is it, and so conscious of adequate resources in Him who is its life and fulness, that in every age it has added to its difficulties with fearless faith, assured that each new peril would evoke new power, and each obstacle become the standing ground for a fresh advance.

We, therefore, rejoice in our new wealth, and welcome the most energetic competition amongst the sacred books; in obedience to the injunction of Paul: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," howsoever it may reach us. For God has never left Himself without a witness amongst any peoples. Our Bible itself tells us that the Jew is not His only child. God is the Father of all races of mankind. Though Abraham is elected and lifted on high and made the vehicle of the Divine teaching, Plato is not cast out, but himself taught that "the world is a created image of the eternal archetypes that dwell in the uncreated mind." Was Job a Jew? Did Melchizedek belong to the chosen race? Was Cyrus a child of the sacred people? Did not Cornelius secure the Divine favour, and yet was he not a Roman? Was not Buddha nobly unselfish and Aristides strenuously just? God is not a respecter of persons, but in *every nation*, and outside of nationalities, even amongst barbarians, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him, led by His Spirit, and saved by His love.

All men are capable of religion. The faculty is in us; is part of our moral structure, as much as the eye,

or the taste, or touch is of our physical nature, and waits to be evoked by external and internal influences, by the universe, by God Himself in the workings of His Spirit. God has many gospels ; the gospel of falling rain and fruitful seasons for the people of Lystra ; the good news of the unity of all men and of all life having its root in God, for the philosophers of Athens ; the evangel of Abraham and Moses, of David and Isaiah for the sons of Israel ; as well as the glad tidings of the Incarnation and the Sacrifice, the Resurrection and Ascension of the Son of Man for all men, everywhere and in all ages of the world.

Christianity afraid of comparative religion ! Sooner let the artist be afraid of the background that makes more vivid and arresting the beautiful products of his fancy, and imparts distinctness of outline and clearness of revelation to his figures. Afraid ! Sooner will a father stand in dread of the son who accepts and perfects his ideas, fills out his plans, and crowns his work. Afraid ! Never ! Every honest review of the whole spiritual stores of mankind can only serve to exalt the Bible to its true place as the "God of Books," by showing—

- (1) Its careful inclusion of all the real spiritual wealth of the Revelation of God in all ages, and through all lands.
- (2) Its gradual but ultimate and decisive exclusion of whatever affronts the balanced intelligence, pure conscience, disciplined will, and regenerate soul of man.
- (3) Its undeniable uniqueness in its Ideas of God and Man, Sin and Salvation, Man, Woman

and Child, the Individual and Society, Life and Immortality.

- (4) Its marvellous energies in the renewing and expansion of the intellectual, moral and spiritual life of mankind.

VI. If universality is the stamp of the ultimate religion, and catholicity the mark of the conquering Revelation, then the "knowledge of the Lord" imparted in our Bible must "cover the earth as the waters do the seas."

Our Bible is the Book of the great universalities—of the love of God for all men; of the propitiation, not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world; of the gift of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

As nothing is more easily demonstrated, so nothing is more striking than the "enthusiasm for humanity" that throbs and glows in our Scriptures. It is the miracle of literature that the books of the narrow, passionately bigoted, semi-civilized Jews should give the victory in every battle to a spirit so broad and free, so missionary and universal. Everywhere the revealing spirit is in conflict with the exclusive spirit of the people, battles with it from century to century, and at last triumphs over it, and constitutes them in spite of themselves a missionary nation, a people of witnesses for God and apostles of salvation to all men. In both its parts, the older as well as the newer, it utters the missionary message, forecasts the missionary plan, executes the missionary task, and breathes the missionary spirit. As a record of

religion it is itself a witness—not for a local or tribal God, but for the living and loving Father, at work ; at work for all men, on and through a special race of men ; at work in Abraham and his offspring for their redemption from the divisiveness and strife of tribes and races engendered by sin. Nothing is alien to it that is *human*, for God revealing Himself is God seeking man as man, coming into closer acquaintance with him, winning him from his evil loves, firing him with cleansing enthusiasms, filling him with loftiest and purest ideals, and, therefore, embracing everything everywhere that is "good" and "true" and "beautiful" in every religion of man, and in every fragment of religious history ; utilizing the *facts* on which the religions of men are based, enforcing all that is true in their principles, and supplementing, as time approaches its fulness, all that is wanting in His former contributions to the needs of men, by the gift of His Son. Jesus Christ said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," and He who is the *Sun* of the knowledge of the Lord in these Scriptures draws all *truths* to Himself, so that thereby He may draw all men. The magnet is put amongst the religious faiths of the world, and nothing is left behind that has in it the faintest trace of genuine metal.

Some unknown friend sends me the *Secular Review*. Of the many things that surprise me, one is that the editor and writers so frequently say in varying forms of speech that Christianity is not new, that some of the sayings of the Teacher are discoverable in the writings of the Greek moralists, and some of the petitions of His prayer in the devout breathings of

the Rabbis, and that Christianity is thereby discredited as a Revelation from God.* To me such facts show that Christianity is part of the Divine education of the world, that it is from the Father of all men and is meant for all men. A system of medicine that despised or ignored remedies consecrated by the use of the ages, and vindicated by their effectiveness in every country under heaven, would be sure of failure. Its originality would be its condemnation, and its exclusiveness its doom. The reformer who essays to create a totally new world, and begins by annihilating the old one, is justly met with suspicion and resistance. Christ destroys nothing good. He has not come to abolish the laws of Moses, or the prophecies of Isaiah, in the Old Testament; the yearnings for the "Dawn," and the cry to Varuna for mercy in the Vedas, the faith in immortality of the Egyptian King, and the longing for the spiritual that sobs in the Avesta. He comes not to destroy, but to fulfil, *i.e.*, to fill out their programme, realise their ideals, take up, absorb, and use all that is wise and true and good. Not a grain of gold is lost that has ever been dug out of the mine of truth.†

Does the Confucianism of the Chinese insist on morality as the highest good, and declare that apart from the ethical, man can have no peace? Christ's

* It shows a singular confusion of ideas and a painfully limited knowledge of Christianity for Mr. Grant Allen to speak of this objection as new, and to label it "*The New Heterodoxy.*" Cf. *Westminster Gazette*, September 7th 1895.

† Cf. Genesis xlix., 10; Haggai ii., 7; Ephesians i., 10; *Justin Martyr Apol.*, I., 46; *Clement Alex. Strom*, lib..Cap. V., 28, lib. VI., Cap. V., 42.

great theme is *righteousness*. He says, “What do ye more than others?” “In vain ye call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say.” “Who is My mother, and My brother, and sister? Who, but those who do the will of My father who is in heaven.” Christianity emphasises the Confucian insistence on practical morality as the secret of a blessed life, clothes it with eternal sanctions, and infuses the power for a strenuous obedience.

Does the Zoroastrian religion supply a conception of God—monotheistic, spiritual and exalted—and set out sharply the antagonisms of good and evil? Christ is the Light of the World, the Revealer that the one God is the Father and Saviour of men, that the prince of this world-evil is judged and condemned, and its extinction foredoomed.

Did Buddha say—

“ There is no caste in blood
Which runneth of one hue; nor caste in tears
Which trickle salt with all; neither comes man
To birth with tilka-mark stamped on the brow,
Nor sacred thread on neck.”

Christ is the typical Son of God, and brother of all men. In the new nature He creates, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but “Christ is all in all.”

Is it a fact that the Mahomedan reform set the people free from Arabian heathenism on the one hand, and Syrian Christian polytheism on the other, by its vehement assertion of the negation, “There is no God but Allah!” Still that is only the feeble

and fragmentary echo of the older teaching that came by Moses and Isaiah, a living and personal translation of the sublime confession, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength." *

Thus—

"Truth is one;
And, in all lands beneath the sun,
Whoso hath eyes to see may see
The tokens of its unity.
No scroll of creed its fulness wraps,
We trace it not by school-boy maps,
Free as the sun and air it is
Of latitudes and boundaries.
In Vedic verse, in dull Koran,
Are messages of good to man ;
The angels to our Aryan sires
Talked by the earliest household fires ;
The prophets of the elder day,
The slant-eyed sages of Cathay,
Read not the riddle all amiss
Of higher life evolved from this.
Nor doth it lessen what He taught,
Or make the gospel Jesus brought
Less precious, that His lips re-told
Some portion of that truth of old ;
Denying not the proven seers,
The tested wisdom of the years ;
Confirming with His own impress
The common law of righteousness.
We search the world for truth ; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,

* " We think Islam, neither more nor less than Judaism, adapted to Arabia plus the apostleship of Jesus and Mahomet." Deutsch. Art. Islam, *Quarterly Review*, Vol. CXXVII., No. 284. Mahammed lived as a youth with Jews, and the Koran owes large debts to the Pentateuch and the Talmud.

From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
And weary-seekers of the best,
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.
And all our treasure of old thought
In His harmonious fulness wrought
Who gathers in one sheaf complete
The scattered blades of God's sown wheat,
The common growth that maketh good
His all-embracing Fatherhood."*

Indeed, "every Scripture inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness" is, in pith, substance, and spirit, gathered together and preserved in this Divine Library, so "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

VII. But the slightest acquaintance with the sacred books of the peoples will prove to us that their essential value is determined quite as much by what they reject as by what they elect and assert. The "great renunciations" of life make or mar the individual; build up or destroy a church, a nation, a race, or a religion. The "omissions" of our Scriptures are amongst its potent arguments; its "silences" rank high in the list of its golden gifts; its grand rejections witness on many a page to its Inspiration, and proclaim its superlative worth for the sons of men.

But let me carefully note, at this point, that we speak of the BIBLE ITSELF, and not of any human

* *Miriam*, by Whittier.

theories concerning its composition, the processes of its growth as a literature, and the relative value of its differing contents; for there are theories that imperil its broad sanity, its healthy tone, its fulness of service—theories shallow, unscientific, derived not from the Book itself, but from corrupting intrusions of Judaizing ritualism, Greek philosophy, Roman law, mediaeval superstition, scholastic system-builders, and priest-bitten ecclesiastics—theories that treat the description of the meanness of Jacob and the wickedness of David as an approval of sin, the speeches of Satan as the voice of God, the words of Zophar and Bildad as the sayings of Paul and John, the Book of Leviticus as if it were not illumined and superseded by the letter to the Hebrews, geography and statistics as equally vital with redemption and ethics; and so cloud and obscure “the knowledge of the Lord” and preclude its regal influence over the minds and lives of men. The Revelation of God is progressive. The conceptions of the Eternal and of the Human clarify and expand from age to age. Elements in the older stages of Revelation are defective, and are therefore superseded by the later. But speaking of the Bible in its final authoritative teachings and comparing it with other sacred books, its universal prevalence and eternal permanence are guaranteed by its advancing and ultimately absolute freedom from moral and religious error, its balanced and symmetrical expressions of truth, its distinctive rejection in and by Jesus of everything that affronts the pure thought and fully informed intelligence and quickened conscience of men.

(1) Speaking of the Koran, Mr. Bosworth Smith says: "It teems with ideas, allusions, and even phraseology, drawn not so much from the written as from the oral Jewish law, from the traditions that grew around it, and the commentaries on it," *i.e.*, from the Talmud, and he applies to it such terms as "inartistic, incoherent, self-contradictory, and dull," and says that "it defies analysis." Moreover, Dr. Percy Badger holds that "the unique interest attaching to its author is insufficient to redeem the Koran from this reproach of dulness."

Dr. Dallinger, a trained observer and reliable witness, reports: "I have just completed a careful, and, I will add, a thoughtful and earnest, reading of the twelve published volumes of that magnificent series of translations edited by Professor Max Müller, and known as the Sacred Books of the East. These are literal translations made from the sacred books of the inhabitants of India from the very earliest times, and of the inhabitants of China. Now, I declare honestly and sincerely, that, up to the time of reading these books, I had a very profound respect for the religions of these people, as I supposed them to be promulgated in their sacred books. I had a reverence amounting almost to a consciousness of that which was sublime, as I thought of the intellectual endeavours of the ancient Indians, the awful intellectual struggles of those whose religious yearnings were put forth in the ancient books of India and China. Now that I have read these books, I confess to having had the utmost struggle to pass from page to page of any of them. They are actually stuffed from one end to the

other with the veriest weakness. Childishness is but a noble expression to give to the largest amount of matter they contain. Their inferiority astounded me, their intellectual want was utterly a marvel. Their triviality, their utter inability to meet any of the needs of one human mind, are manifest everywhere."

Next I refer, on the authority of Dr. Fairbairn, to one whom he calls a distinguished scholar, whose name is well known throughout Europe, as almost the symbol for scientific enquiries in this field. "If you want," says he, "to prove the truth, the wisdom, the sober and honest history of the Bible and the purity of its religion, place it among the sacred books of the East. In these books there are many grains of gold, but they are hid in mountains of the most extraordinary rubbish, and the extraordinary thing is, that it is the rubbish that calls forth the enthusiasm and admiration of the peoples that own them. The sobriety of the Bible, the purity of its spirit, the elevation and devotion of its tone, make it occupy an entirely unique place."

In brief, all those best able to judge, Christians and sceptics, students of literature and science, agree that our Bible holds primary rank for its successful avoidance of triviality, its uniform elevation of idea, uplifting expansiveness of story and song, prevailing inwardness and persistent proclamation of the supremacy of the Spiritual and Eternal. Without controversy, it is in this respect entirely without a peer.

(2) Nor is it less remarkable that the "knowledge of the Lord" in these Scriptures is kept perfectly clear

of the *taint of fatalism, whilst asserting the sovereignty of God*; and the certain, if delayed, victory of His will. The Brahmin conception of Deity is little more than Herbert Spencer's Eternal indestructible energy; a deified fate, the origin of all the forms and varieties of the forces that play in and around our life. It is the easiest conception we can form of God; flows into the mind on the streams of the forces about us; but it is inadequate, hard, innutritious, repellant, and even destructive. It is not good tidings for the meek, healing for the broken in heart, deliverance for the captive spirit burdened with the weary weight of this unintelligible world; and, therefore, it has no right to a place in human life. That omission is the mark of Divinity. Such silence is itself a victory over the false and pessimistic voices of every-day exigencies, and a convincing witness of original Inspiration.

(3) Akin to the rejection of fatalism is the Bible's *triumphant renunciation of a pessimistic view of human life*. In his first sermon Buddha says, "Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, the presence of objects we hate is suffering, separation from objects we love is suffering, not to obtain what we desire is suffering, clinging to existence is suffering. Complete cessation of existence is cessation of suffering, and the eight-fold task which leads to the cessation of suffering is right belief, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavour, right memory, right imitation. This is the noble truth about suffering."

Noble truth! Confessedly; but how far "the noble

truth" of Sakya Mouni falls short of the gracious words which proceeded out of the mouth of the Saviour of souls, the Divine confidant of all troubled men! Our teachers never shrink from frank recognition of the worst, strongly affirm the fearful waste of sin, and the tremendous energy of the heritage of evil, picture life as a tragedy, and creation as groaning for its deliverance, and yet never leave us to sorrow, as though without hope: "for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Man does not need a Bible to preach to him the awful "power of circumstances," the weird and subtle wickedness of the heart, the tyranny of nature; and that he—

"If matched with symbols of immensity
Must quail, forsooth, before the quiet sea or sky."

It is the first lesson he learns and the last he forgets. Far other is man's want. Far other is God's gift. Eden's garden is radiant with the promise of redemption. The beauty of the rainbow arches the sky of the recently deluged land. The soul is stronger than nature. The crown is at the end of the way of the Cross.*

(4) But the most distinguishing rejection characteristic of the Revelation of God in Christ remains to be stated. Professor Monier Williams says: "For myself I claim that in the discharge of my duties for

* "For the first time the aureole of sanctity encircled the brow of sorrow and invested it with a mysterious charm."—Lecky, *Hist. of European Rationalism*, II., p. 266.

about 40 years I have devoted as much time as any man living to the study of these sacred books, and I have found the one key-note, the one diapason, so to speak, of all these so-called sacred books. Whether it be the Vedas of the Brahmin, the Puranas of the Saiva, the Koran of the Mahomedan, the Zendavesta of the Parsee, or the Tripitaka of the Buddhist, the one key-note, the one reference which you will find through all of them, is salvation by works. They all say salvation must be purchased, must be bought with a price; but the sole price, the sole purchase money, must be our own works and deservings."*

It is the glory of our two Testaments that while they insist with overwhelming energy on the necessity for "works," "fruits" and character as inseparable from salvation, they at the same time make those "works" the free and glad movements of the life, by showing God delighting in mercy, meeting man in Christ with the gift of pardon, bringing to him—Himself rejoicing in the splendour of His gifts—an everlasting redemption, and granting him the infinite resources of the indwelling Spirit for his war with evil, the total renovation of his nature, and the perfection of his character.

He that warreth does not entangle himself with

* "A spotless child sleeps on the flowery moss,
'Tis well for him—but when a guilty man,
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away—can he return to rest
At once by lying there? Our sires knew well
The fitting way for such; dark cells; dim lamps;
A strong floor one may writhe on like a worm;
No mossy pillow blue with violets."—Browning, *Paracelsus*.

the affairs of this life. The racer who means to be first at the goal lays aside every weight. So our Book of Religion, destined to universality, inspires and nourishes the devout life without sacrificing mental energy; shows the dominion of the perfect and absolute will without imprisoning the human soul; discovers the depths of human depravity and sin without breeding despair of reconciliation with life and destiny; stimulates and guides conduct without generating self-righteousness; and begets love and faith and hope and zeal for righteousness, without imperilling the graces of humility, meekness, patience, and gentleness. The Bible has less in it, a thousand times over, to repel and hinder its ascent to supremacy in the spiritual life of man than any, and all the rest, of the sacred books of the world.

VIII. But the surest guarantee we have that the "knowledge of the Lord" in the Bible is ordained to cover the earth as the waters the sea, is in its absolutely original conception of *God*, and by consequence of the nature, value and relations of individual man, of the true meaning of life, and of the conditions of social harmony and social growth.

The value of a Bible is as its idea of God. This determines all. Here is the Lydian stone of Religion. The Alpha and Omega of all tests of a permanent instruction for men is: What is the character and extent of the "knowledge of the Lord" it imparts? Ideas rule the world—not to-day or to-morrow—but in the sum of things, and of all ideas none are so decisive and controlling as the ideas of God.

Think, then, of this fact. Bunsen, in his "God in History," has a chapter entitled "Was Buddha an atheist?" The possibility of the question is itself a severe condemnation. The bare fact that the Three Pitakas, or Sacred Books of the Buddhists, take as their "ultimate fact the existence of the material world, and of conscious beings living within it,"* and make no response to man's quest for the Eternal, must disqualify the religion of 340,000,000 of our fellows from final dominion. A religion without God is a religion without hope; and hopelessness is first weakness, then defeat, and ultimately death.

Dr. Moffat maintains, that "the primitive religion of mankind was the worship of one God," and says, "its evidences exist in the Veda, Avesta, and Shoo-King, as truly as in Genesis;" † and Professor Wilson adds, "there can be no doubt the fundamental doctrine of the Vedas is monotheism." But it is obvious that Confucianism avoids the mysterious but irrepressible theme, confuses its theism with the worship of ancestors, and fetters and slays ethical and spiritual progress by the despotism of the dead.

According to "Schem's Statistics," there are 210,000,000 Mahomedans, and it is undeniable that the only two religions that are undermining heathenism are the religions of the Koran and the Bible, and they are alike monotheistic and missionary. Now Mahomedanism, with its brief dogmatic creed concerning God, completely crushed out the Agnostic religion of Guatama Buddha in the land of its birth and

* *Buddhism*, by T. W. Rhys Davids, p. 87.

† *Comparative History of Religions*, Vol. I., p. 199.

drove it to China, Burmah, and Ceylon for a resting place.*

But whence came the conquering energies of the Islamic monotheism? Mainly from Biblical sources. It is Semitic. That great genius and spiritual reformer, Mahommed, drank deeply at the well-spring of Revelation. The purer elements of his power are Hebraic. He carried over into Islam the idea of God—Almighty, Supreme Sovereign and Judge of man; but he emphasized the more harsh and stern elements of the earlier Hebrew conception of God, and by his energetic repetition of its negative aspects, impoverished its soul-healing force and enfeebled its ethical strength. The God of the Jews became a fierce Arab Chieftain, sweeping with destructive might against his foes, without tenderness and without aim, other than to destroy. He is “solitary, severe and stern;” a fighter, and not a Redeemer; so that, though “the Moslem knows, as few monotheists do, that God is one and great, he does not know, like Moses, that He is righteous, or like the Prophets, that He is Holy, or like Christ, that He is love.”† The Koran owes its spiritual wealth to Moses and Christ; its painful poverty to Mahommed and Arabia.

It is, therefore, to the “knowledge of the Lord” given to men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost we must go for our creative, all-determining, and final conception of God. Come near, then, to these Scriptures. Take off your shoes before

* *Missions to Moslems.* *Andover Review*, 1888, p. 9.

† *Primitive Polity of Islam.* Prof. Fairbairn in the *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLII., p. 864.

this bush aflame with God, but ever unconsumed. God is great. God is incomprehensible. He inhabits the high and holy place. We cannot reach His throne. But He, in His gracious condescension, can and will reach us, and dwell with us, if our hearts be humble and our spirits contrite. No timid Agnosticism need make us halt, no idle Atheism blind our eyes. The Bible is full of Him—begins with His name and work, describes His appearing to infant man by routes which win his confidence and enlarge his life, reports His doings to the elect people as the pattern of His work in each and for all, and then completes the many-mansioned edifice of Revelation by the gift of His Son—His own Son, the brightness of His glory, the express and indubitable image of His personality. His veritable and essential self.

Schopenhauer has rendered valuable service by forcing us to consider the fact that the fundamental thing in the universe is not Idea but Will, the Soul in movement; and our Bible warrants the addition, the Soul of all Souls in movement to redeem and renew sinful men. This is the unique and original force in the Christian Revelation of God. It is a record of the successive stages in which God Himself creates a religion for His child; and, therefore, the "knowledge of the Lord" is not in Idea only, or firstly, but mainly in action; "for this is LIFE eternal to *know* Thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." The Bible is God's biography; the story of His acts, of His speech to Adam and Abraham, His walks with Enoch and David, sermons through Noah and Elijah, glad tidings by Isaiah and

Malachi, and salvation by His Son. He appears everywhere as the "*living*" God, not for a moment forgetting or forsaking man; but in action, and always in action on the plane of human life, to forgive and save. Not the faintest trace of a dead mechanical deism appears in our Scriptures. Jehovah is not the last term in a series of philosophical reasonings. He is not the idol of the intellect—but the most immediate of all realities, "nearer to men than their breathing, closer than hands and feet," beating-heart to beating-heart, present to trust, and hope, and love. He lives, He loves, He hates, He renews, He rules. "I am Jehovah who *exercise* loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight," saith Jehovah. That is the highest and truest "knowledge of the Lord," the best for the mind and heart of man, and is as sure to cover the earth as the light fills and floods with radiance the brightest day in June.

(2) The great problem of all religion is to get rid of sin and bring in an everlasting righteousness, and therefore the *working* value of any conception of God is measurable by the attitude He takes in it towards moral evil. This is the crucial test of fitness for our work-a-day, suffering world, "in which we sit and hear one another groan."*

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

*Cf. *The Penitential Psalms of the Chaldeans*, quoted by Cheyne in the *Psalms, Parchment Library*, p. 9.

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of mars or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Three answers have been given to this question by the sacred books of the world :—(a) The first says Jehovah will be pleased with the sacrifices of priests, and the due observances of religious ceremonial, and sums up all duty in the direction—

"Work the rite as bids the law,
Without omission, slip, or flaw."

Pilgrimages, fastings, sacrifices, will bribe the angry God into partiality and favour, and appease His terrible wrath. (b) The second appeals to the reason, contemplates nothing beyond human resources, and suspends the welfare of man on obedience to law. Here Stoicism and Buddhism, Confucianism and Mahommedanism, grasp hands. (c) But what is the answer of the Christian Revelation? "The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the Word of Faith, which we preach; because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "The Mussulman gains the knowledge of God," says Bosworth Smith, "but he can hardly be

said to approach Him by listening to the lofty message of God's prophet." But here God Himself comes to man; does not stand aloof to be sought for, but Himself seeks for lost man. He is the God of salvation. Deliverances to Him belong. The gift is God's. God is His gift. Man receives pardon first, and his nature opens afterwards for richer and larger things. The moral ideal is associated with religious truth in the Old Testament, and the energy and Inspiration that convert the ideal into actual conduct is made known in the New, and so God in the Cross makes an end of sin and brings in an everlasting righteousness.

(3) We must not forget that the word "man" shares in this noble conception of God, and becomes a larger and richer term in the religion of the Son of God than anywhere else. For the first time it includes woman. And that is one of the most signal revolutions in the thought of the world. For the first time it means boy and girl. It welcomes and embraces the babe. Alas! that childhood has had to wait till this century before it was seen! Womanhood is redeemed, exalted, and for the first time in her history ascends to her right place. Infancy is made beautiful and hallowing for ever. The weakest, driven to the wall, cannot be left to die in sight of the Cross of the strong Son of God. The poor, unpitied, and unhelped must be rescued, since He who was rich became poor for them. You cannot throw away the lives of men in sight of the Divine sacrifice. *Each* soul is inviolably sacred. The meanest savage has

the possibilities of an angel, and the most untutored heathen may become a partaker of the Divine nature.

Islam, we gladly acknowledge, inculcates the lower virtues, temperance, cleanliness, justice, fortitude, courage, hospitality, veracity, and resignation ; but a high historical authority says, "It has consecrated slavery, it has consecrated polygamy, it has consecrated despotism." Could a heavier indictment be brought against a religion? Islam aims a deadly blow at man in the three most important spheres of life and progress. It blights and blasts the individual, it shatters the home, and converts government into a deadly tyranny. The disciples of the Koran have great qualities. They are sober, they do not gamble, they are brave and honest, but nations are sure to decline from greatness, and are doomed to irretrievable decay, who refuse to give woman her right place in the family, and in the world. The distinctive and exalting conception of woman dominant throughout the Christian Scriptures is a sure guarantee that the only ultimate religion is that of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Mary ; born under the law, and born of a woman ; not less full of feminine grace, sweetness, and patience, than rich in masculine robustness and invincible energy.

(4) God is one, and men are *Man*. Society is the school for the individual. The individual is the servant of the whole. Perfection is only possible where the individual lives not for himself, but for all for whom Christ died. The Social Ideal enshrines and is embraced by the individual.

I hazard nothing, therefore, when I assert that the Book that builds the "City of God" on the fullest, broadest, conception of the Eternal Father, on the extinction of sin, the salvation of little children, and the strong aid of regenerate women, is and must be pre-ordained to complete victory. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

IX. I can only point, in a sentence or two, and by the briefest illustration, to the unequalled sources of argumentative strength exhibited in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual achievements of this Book.

The Bible has been the quickening of the intellectual activity of all the men and nations it has reached, laid the foundations of new literatures amongst barbarous and savage races, and given such a stimulus to the reflective as well as to the moral faculties of mankind as to make it the pioneer and promoter of intellectual as well as of moral regeneration. Our early Anglo-Saxon writings carry us back to a group of industrious monks in Britain, in the forests of the Rhine, and on the banks of the Weser, translating the Revelations of God, and sowing the seeds of the knowledge of the Lord in the Saxon fields.

By these Scriptures Christ has taken possession increasingly of the THOUGHT of the world, and He will continue until philosophy has its centre in His Cross, and literature itself is brought into captivity to His benignant authority. The intellectual history of man is crystallizing more and more around ONE BOOK, and it is not the Koran of the Mahomedans,

not the Avesta of the Persians, not the bibles of the Hindoos, but it is the Word of the Lord which liveth and abideth for ever. When the earth is peopled by men of the clearest intellect, and largest intelligence, "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea."

A missionary says: "I would that I could take you to a little village near my station, where they had embraced Christianity in a body but eight months before ; and where the high priest of the temple near by came secretly to me in my tent, and asked : 'Sir, will you please impart to me the secret. What is it that makes that Bible of yours have such power over the lives of those that embrace it? Now, it is but eight months since the people joined you. Before that they were quarrelsome ; they were riotous ; they were lazy ; they were shiftless ; and now see what a difference there is in them ! Now they are active, energetic, laborious ; they never drink ; they never quarrel. Why, sir, I joined in the persecution when they became Christians, and tried to stamp out Christianity before it gained a foothold here ; but they stood firm, and now in all the region around here the people all respect and honour them. What is it that makes the Bible have such a power over the lives of those that embrace it? Our Vedas have no such power. Please, sir, give me the secret !'"

We are not afraid for, or ashamed of, our Bible. It is the Record of the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; it has operated mightily in the making of the most influential people of the old world ; it has shared in the task of upbuilding the

new world, and it is as vital and vitalizing as ever. In the battles of the sacred books it has gone from victory to victory, and though the ancient standard will have to be carried over many a tough field, the final issue is certain, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

X. One mistake we must not make, for it would be fatal—that of forgetting that our faith does not rest, in its last support, upon the qualities and forces of the Scriptures, but on God, the “living” God—living when the Book is closed, acting without it and with it ; “mothering” us, as James says, “by the Word of Truth” spoken by living and loving men. Jesus did not say to His disciples, “Go, preach to everybody, everywhere, and lo, a *Book* is with you ; but, lo, *I* am with you.” There! in Him! is the invincible power of the missionary.

Mahommed exalts the letter, Christ delivers from it. The Moslem is bound to the Koran. The Christian is under law to Christ Himself, and to Him only. The Arabian Reformer says the last word, and fixes the term of progress ; the prophets of Israel say, “other prophets will God raise up—hear them,” and Christ promised His Spirit to guide His disciples into all truth. Mahommed is sole builder of the Koran ; our Bible is a library compiled by many minds and in different ages.

Christianity was missionary before it was literary. Paul was not a colporteur. He was a living epistle of Christ. It was not the Hebrew Scriptures but Christ Himself he bore in his heart and preached to men.

The Society at Jerusalem was not an organization for the distribution of Bibles : it was a Bethesda, where the halt and lame, blind and deaf, found healing and health. Emerson says, "books are good when a man cannot think." Truth in regenerate men is more than truth in printed books. The *Book* is the life-blood of a grand succession of master-spirits, stirred to their inmost depths by the Holy Ghost, and speaking as they are thus moved ; but Christ is the *Master-Spirit Himself*, moving men as of old to do their work, directing their goings, and making their word to prosper. The Scriptures are the progressive Revelation of truth in the world of ideas ; but Christ Himself is the Source and Inspiration of present-day progress, and by His Spirit guides men into all truth still. This Bible is the Record of God's Word, the story of His brooding over the souls of Israel ; Christ is God speaking *now*, the Holy Ghost brooding over the souls of the men to whom we go, and bringing order and beauty out of the chaos in which they are left by the old religions. In the Gospels we see Christ giving Himself on Calvary to make an end of sin, and we say, "Behold, how He loved men." In the heart we feel His actual, cleansing, and renewing Spirit ; and say, "He loves *me*, and gives Himself to *me* ;" and so sing with St. Bernard—

" When once Thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine."

Thus, whilst our faith in the Scriptures as the final Revelation of God and man rests on bases as solid as

reason can define and obtain, it is made *invincible* by the witness of the heart to Christ, and the testimony the souls of men bear to His *present power* to give pardon for sin, ease to the conscience, strength to the feeble will, and life for death. Our trust is in a living Leader; not in a book we read, but in a Divine Person, Who *sends* us as His messengers, and sends us to His own brothers, brothers for whom He died, and for whose salvation He still lives, loves, and works. He died for all. He lives for all. His love constrains us. His compassions stir us. His Inspirations fire and urge us. He is in the Bible, and with it, and works through it, and His victories will vindicate and illuminate it more than all the battles of scholars and critics. *The Christ of to-day living amongst men, solving their problems, is the living and irrefutable evidence of the truth of the Bible.* Missions will reinstate and reinforce the Book until every inch of this round earth is enriched with God's Revelation.

XI. With unabated faith, therefore, we take the great Missionary Book in the name of the Great Missionary Himself who came to seek and to save that which was, and which is, lost, assured that as He is the Brother and Redeemer of the Race, so it is the Book for the Race. He must reign, and therefore it must. Not, *it* must, therefore He must. It is His reign that carries that of the Book.

The once crucified Redeemer must reign. Sacrifice carries the right to rule. Not the Koran that denies His death, and has no room for the cross of

reconciling, atoning, and self-sacrificing love; not the good news of a living and authoritative will, preached by Mahommed, but the good tidings of an all-ruling love, constraining the Moslem to add the best of their Koran to the full and faultless Revelation of the Christ. He must reign: not an agnostic, hopeless, and pessimistic Buddhism. For God has made man for Himself, and He is restless till he rests in Him. He must reign over the millions of Hindostan, sitting in the light and warmth of this Eastern sun, and finding healing and quickening in His beams, and over the myriads of Chinese rejoicing in the access of His transforming power. He must reign. Egypt shall surrender her "Ritual for the dead," as they shall see the immortality, of which they dreamt and guessed, brought to light with such beauty and softness as to transfigure with heavenly radiance the commonest day we live. He must reign. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust, yea, all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him. His Name shall endure for ever. His Name shall be continued as long as the sun. All men shall be blessed in Him. All nations shall call Him happy."

Let the "Word of the Lord" have free course and be glorified. Publish the glad tidings of salvation to all men. "*Make disciples of all the nations.*" Carry this Oriental Book back to the East from whence it came, that it may renew the decaying

energies of the Eastern peoples, and open for them the gates of the kingdom of progress. "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion; no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those that the Scriptures teach."^{*} Make them known. Clear them of the misjudgments of system-builders. Get rid of mental timidity. Away with cowardice. Appreciate the good in all sacred books, and let that good pioneer the way to the Saviour. Remember the corruptions of Christianity were the opportunity of Mahommed, and still give the only chance of victory to his followers. Abolish drink trafficking. Cleanse British legislation of all share in trades that degrade and vices that destroy. Cease from miserable, stingy giving. Rise to the high ideal of life offered in the Sacrifice of the Christ. Carry a full Christianity in a perfectly obedient and renewed life to the mind and heart of all men; and as sure as God is God, "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth with salvation and righteousness as the waters cover the sea."

* John Milton.

XII.

PRESENT DAY INSPIRATION.

"And the Lord came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for Thy servant heareth."—*I SAMUEL* iii., 10.

DOES God speak to our children to-day as He did to this lad Samuel? Do messages and forces that clear the day's work, chasten the spirit, gladden the heart, impart invincible energy and stimulate the larger life of the world, reach us now, as they did the dedicated soul of this son of Hannah three thousand years ago? Is it given to us to see the truth without intervening veil, to feel its glowing and irrepressible heat, and to utter it with persuasive and cleansing eloquence? or are God's prophets all dead, even to the last man, and the whole succession ended for ever?

I do not ask does God speak to us in an *audible* voice, and in dictionary English, freed from all the possible obscurities that cling like a glutinous coat to our every-day speech. For you know well enough, the *form* is not, and never can be, of the *essence* of a message. Methods are details. Spiritual impulse and enlightenment, life and power, are all in all, the

Alpha and Omega of Inspiration. By telephone or telegraph, by written letter or printed page, by lucid speech or the sympathetic contact of a visible but voiceless human presence, by the magnetic and mysterious transfusion from a quickening biography of the influence of a far-away soul of real greatness, or the still more inexplicable potency of a haunting memory; ideas and impressions, convictions and enthusiasms, may find their way to us and subdue us to the finest issues. Science itself forbids a materialistic faith, and pushes us with pained eyes to the rim of the unseen universe; and ill indeed should we have "learned Christ" if we did not know that as it was "expedient" for the Apostles that the Incarnate Lord should leave the narrow streets of an earthly disciple-life, in order that the Spirit might take His place, and fill the expanding "City of God" as it spread over the wide world, so it is "expedient for us" not to hear the Voice of God approaching us by one *sense* in the stillness of the night, as did young Samuel, but rather to find Him standing over against all our faculties and experiences, and filling the entire compass of our manifold and growing being. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more," for "we look not at the things which are seen"—the pipes of the organ, the structure of the vocal chords, the wires of the telegraphists—but at the things which are not seen, the message of Divine love, the evangel of pardon, the music that frees the heart of care and fills it with joy. "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Nor is our question, perhaps I ought to add, Does God so speak to us as to make known truth not discoverable anywhere else, or by any other way, thus giving us something absolutely original as *Revelation*, and making a permanent addition to that "Word of God" contained in the Old and New Testament Scriptures—Scriptures which are the *history* of the manifestation of God to inspired souls? *Revelation* in its strict and high sense of making known for the first time truths and facts concerning God, man, and eternity, implies and necessitates Inspiration; but Inspiration does not imply and necessitate *Revelation*.*

* In his *Thoughts on Revelation*, J. McCleod Campbell emphasises the distinction between the Inspiration of *Revelation* and the Inspiration of the *Divine Life*: a distinction which is ably illustrated and enforced in the masterly work of Prof. Ladd on *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. II., 460, *et seq.* *Revelation* is a special, original, unique "product" of an inspired personality such as Moses, or Paul, or Christ; a "product" susceptible of detachment from the inspired person, and of reproduction in the spoken, or written, or printed form.

The term "Inspiration" has been freely applied to preachers of late. But what is an inspired preacher? What is "the gift of prophecy?" Is the inspired preacher anything more than a man speaking to his fellows (1) with magnetic intensity of emotion; (2) out of an unwavering conviction that he is uttering that which is at once absolutely and verifiably *true*, and of unspeakably momentous issues to the audience addressed; and (3) in this case uttering truths obtained from the Bible at first hand; but (4) wrought into and made part of the substance of a rich personal experience, and an elevated character? But, it may be asked, ought we to *let down* the word "Inspiration" to that level? Is it not better to retain it to describe the unique and exceptional facts represented in the "words spoken unto the fathers by the prophets," and Apostles, and Christ, and embodied in the Old and New Testaments? No doubt it is, if you can. But you cannot. Man makes his own dictionary, lifts up and lets down the significance of terms as he pleases, and the word

"There are," says Goethe, "many echoes in the world, but few voices." Revelation is rare. Inspiration is common. Revelation is unique and original. Inspiration *may* issue only in an echo to him who listens, but in what is a living and new experience to him who speaks. So far as I can gather, Samuel, though inspired so as to become the first in the *regular succession* of the prophets of Israel, received no new truth, saw no facts going beyond the first principles of religion taught by Moses; but he grasped those truths with a reality and clearness all his own, incorporated them with his experience, disengaged them from the investing superstitions of paganism, and uttered them with a contagious enthusiasm and strength of conviction that made them a regenerating force in the nation. If we may not enter into the "goodly fellowship of the prophets" in that Inspiration, then, indeed, many of us will have a heart-ache that is incurable, life will be a crushing load, the rugged ways of duty will be desolate and dreary, and all our hope for humanity cut off. There is no "open vision." We are left orphans—the poor, and destitute, and despairing children of a dumb God.

With deep solicitude, then, we enquire what are the facts. Is there, or is there not, a Present Day Inspiration?

"Inspiration," like other theological terms, has been so broadened in its range that it is no longer safe to employ it in its older and more restricted meaning. Plimsoll, it was said, was inspired in his famous Parliamentary explosion on behalf of the sailors. Poets are inspired, literary men are inspired, (*Cf. Emerson's Essay on Inspiration*), so are artists, so are preachers. There is the inspiration qualifying for a vocation, and there is the "Inspiration of the Divine Life."

No doubt the prophets of God were exceptional men. All are not apostles. All are not prophets. All do not work miracles. All have not gifts of healing. Every Greek is not a Plato in philosophical insight, an Aristotle in reasoning, or a Pericles in eloquence and political capacity. Every Italian is not a Dante in song, or an Angelo in sculpture. Every Englishman is not a Shakespeare in dramatic genius, a Macaulay in historical portrait-painting, or a Pitt in statesmanship. Every singer is not a Beethoven or a Mozart. Every Christian is not a Luther. Even amongst the prophets of the Old Testament there are greater and lesser lights. Joshua is not a Moses. Elisha is not the equal of Elijah; and Isaiah, filled with the breath of God, soars to heights of rapturous consecration and sublime utterance that leave all his brother prophets far behind. So Samuel is an exceptional man, exceptional in his birth, in his dedication, in his training, in the all-subduing tension of will, in his place in the line of prophets, and in his work as the last and most glorious of the Judges, and the forerunner of the illustrious David.

But in God's world, the exceptional is always the evangelistic. Divinely - anointed men preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, deliver the captives, and herald the arrival of the acceptable year of the Lord. God never makes any man for himself, least of all a prophet. No Scripture is of any private interpretation. Its sweep is world-wide, and Inspiration is for humanity. The Spirit of God is everywhere, underlies all humanity; but the carbon-points from which the electricity that fills and bathes air, earth and

sky, streams out in lanes of brilliant light, are those elect souls in whom He dwells and has free course. All Israel is God's Shekinah, but in these apt personalities the glory of the Divine Presence shows itself with arresting and world-illumining splendour. Thus the prophet Samuel, conspicuous as a Prince and a leader of those in whom the free Spirit of God works with distinctive energy, illustrates the universal freedom of prophetic activity in the Hebrew community, freshly embodies the Law expressed by Moses, that Inspiration is without limits or impediments *from above*, and is never exclusive in its intended range, or exhausted in its available supply, but seizes, moves, and fills prepared and sympathetic souls, as electricity seizes, moves, and fills, a strip of resinous silk.* So the Voice, waking the quiet of the chamber of the consecrated lad, becomes a gospel for every wakeful soul, who, with the eagerness of unfed hope, and the calm trustfulness of the child of the Kingdom, listens for God, ready to hear all He says and do all He bids.

But supposing we had a lingering doubt as to the teaching of the Older Testament, we cannot have any misgiving as to the fact that Christ asserts over and over again the doctrine of the continuity of Inspiration. It is His consolation amongst the irritations and disquiet of opposition and defeat, that His Father reveals the truths of His Kingdom to the open, clinging, and trustful hearts of "babes" like young

* In accordance with this principle Samuel established Societies, or "Schools of the Prophets," in which men might undergo such training as should enable them the more readily to reach the conditions requisite for receiving the Divine Inspiration.

Samuel ; and it is His farewell solace to His followers, in their sorrow over their crude ideas, their partial knowledge, and intolerable feebleness, that when the Holy Spirit is come, He will tell them "all things, and bring all things to their remembrance" that He has said to them in His familiar ministry. He will stimulate their faculties, lift the damp mists off the face of truth, reveal the meaning of the law of Moses, interpret the grace and truth of the character and message of Christ, fill them with perceptive and receptive energy, charge them with the noblest impulse, and so flood them with life and power that they will instruct, quicken, and save the world. From a long experience of the fulfilment of that gracious promise, John the Evangelist says of the Christians of his day, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things"—*i.e.*, all things that pertain to righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. "Since the beginning of the world," says Isaiah, "men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." Exulting in the plenitude of the Revelations made by the Spirit, Paul cites this language of the prophet in order to add the instructive contrast, "but God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now," is still the Word of God to us men. "We know in part and prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

Still the perfect never comes ; it is always coming and coming, enlarging and increasing. It doth not yet appear what we shall know or what we shall be and do. The last Word of God has not been spoken. The last counsel for a perplexed humanity has not been given. God has still more light to break forth from His Holy Word. He and it are exhaustless. We are but at the dawn of Revelation, and there is not and cannot be any "finis" with the Eternal. Let us, therefore, rejoicingly expect to partake of the Divine Nature, to receive of the fulness of the Spirit, and grace for grace, in ceaseless continuity.

A third line of enquiry is open to us, taking us back in some sense upon our first and second. It is this. Are the *results* of Samuel's Inspiration possible to us, or is there anything in them forbidding us to entertain the thought of entering into the goodly fellowship of the prophets?

We know we may walk with God as did Enoch, preach righteousness with Noah, become the children of Abraham in heroic faith and total surrender of will, fight against ourselves with Jacob, battle for social purity with Joseph, assist in building God's House with Moses, share the strength of Samson, and drink the pure streams of domestic joy with Ruth and Naomi ; is it likely, then, we are shut out from the enjoyment of the sublimest issues of the Inspiration of the Spirit of God ?

Those issues, as seen in the life and work of Samuel, are these four : an enlarged and purified conception of God ; a strong and governing sway for ethical

ideas of God and of life ; a contagious impulsion of others towards God and righteousness ; and a fine susceptibility of advance in religious, social, and national activity.

Samuel knew the Lord through the Word of the Lord revealed to him. God spake to him, and the speech was a Revelation of the Speaker. "The Lord appeared in Shiloh, for the Lord revealed Himself in Shiloh by the Word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel."* The prophet is one who speaks forth the message he has received from God and incorporated with His life and experience. He knows God, His purpose and care, His wealth of mercy, His inflexible rectitude, His loving heart, His eternal laws, the conditions of His service, and the nature of His rule. This is the initial and all-inclusive effect of Inspiration. To know God—not so as to define Him, but to enjoy Him ; not so as to demonstrate His being, but to live in and by His love and power ; not so as to comprehend Him, but to trust and follow Him ; this is the gift of the Spirit. Know you not that our cultured keenness debates the personality of God with intensified despair, discusses the Divine attributes amid gathering gloom, and denies the real humanity in God with increased energy? but the Spirit of God "takes of the things of Christ"—His redeeming ideas, His "mind," His way of looking at life and death, duty and destiny, His majestic calm, His flashing anger at inveterate and hypocritical wrong-doers, His habitual pity for the lost and suffering, His spotless sanctity, His

* 1 Samuel iii., 7-21; iv., 1.

glowing self-sacrifice, and showing them to us we see the Father, and it sufficeth us—and it alone suffices us. Do not men also still quarrel over the Bible, its contents, and its composition, its authorship and authority? and have not we a burden of perplexity unlifted till the Spirit shines into our hearts, with a light that gleams from us on the sacred page, enabling us to see it as a *history* of the manifestation of God to men, and to hear it as a Voice speaking to what is deepest in our nature, as a power of God living and active, “sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart?” Well may we pray with Thomas à Kempis:

(1) “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

I am Thy servant, grant me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies.

Incline my heart to the words of Thy mouth; let Thy speech distil as the dew.

The children of Israel in times past said unto Moses, “Speak thou unto us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak unto us lest we die.”

Not so, Lord, not so, I beseech Thee: but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets, but rather do Thou speak, O Lord God, the Inspirer and Enlightener of all the

prophets : for Thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without Thee can profit nothing.

(2) They, indeed, may utter words, but they cannot give the Spirit.

Most beautifully do they speak, but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They teach the letter, but Thou openest the sense : they bring forth mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of sealed things.

They declare Thy commandments, but Thou helpest us to fulfil them.

They point out the way, but Thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work outwardly only, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water, but Thou givest the increase.

They cry aloud in words, but Thou impartest understanding.

(3) Let not Moses therefore speak unto me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the everlasting Truth ; lest I die, and prove unfruitful, if I be only warned outwardly, and not inflamed within :

Lest it turn to my condemnation—the Word heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed.

Speak, therefore, Lord, for Thy servant heareth for Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Speak Thou unto me, to the comfort, however imperfect, of my soul, and to the amendment of

my whole life, and to Thy praise and glory and honour everlasting.*

Next in gravity and in fruitfulness, we see in this inspired hero a moral illumination, an inflexible fidelity to his vocation, and an uncompromising adherence to eternal ethical principles, which infallibly assert his intimate fellowship with a righteous God. He begins his youthful ministry by the delivery of a pain-filled message, asserting the unrelaxed operation of the laws of God on the rapacity and profligacy of the sons of Eli, a man of saintly devoutness and religious fervour, but a father of foolish leniency, and unpardonable weakness. Samuel, young as he is—a mere lad—tells his story every whit, omits not a word from fear for himself, or weak consideration for the feelings of Israel's Judge.† So noble a courage has its fitting crown in the stern demand for absolute obedience to God he makes on King Saul, and his intrepid refusal to accept any shuffles and excuses for a self-willed defiance to the authority of the God of Israel. “To obey,” says he, rising to the loftiest heights of the sun-filled realm of truth, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.”‡ Holiness is the highest proof of Inspiration. The evolution of morality, the clearing of the ideas of righteousness and peace, the application of the principles of eternal truth to the events and crises of the home and of the state; this is

* *Imitation of Christ*, Book III., c. ii.

‡ 1 Samuel xv., 22, 23.

1 Samuel iii., 18.

the prophet's chief work in all ages. Foreseeing and foretelling the specific occurrences of the far-off future are but as dust in the balance compared with the infinite importance and endless results of the clear intuition of moral truths, the energetic application of moral principles, and the creation of a sustained and passionate love for whatever is right, and good, and true. "The Lord let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground," for they were a part of that truth which, however slowly it be revealed, when once here endureth to all generations.

Samuel, like his successors, was a prophet-politician. His chief care was the commonweal. He saw a people weak and disunited, foolish and fractious, licentious and profligate, idolatrous and corrupt ; and with glowing intensity of emotion and ringing eloquence he sent out his manifesto against the reigning idolatry, reasserted the second great commandment against the worship of images, urged repentance and searching of heart, and confederated the tribes together on the basis of a true idea of God, a spiritual worship, and a faithful keeping of the law of righteousness. With prophetic fulness of contagious force he founded the Hebrew Puritanism—battled against the cherished household " gods "—assured their worshippers that they were vain and profitless things, " nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity "—and turned their hearts in trust and hope to the God of Abraham and Moses. Then, baptizing them in the flowing river of his own courage and patriotism, he delivered them from their oppressors, and prepared

the way for the order and civilization of the days of Saul and David. Inspiration has great *national* uses. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," law, justice, and moral order. Every true and consecrated prophet is an earnest patriot, acutely alive to the *real* perils of his country, sympathetic with all its struggles for a purer morality, a higher culture, and a richer joy, and heartily co-operates in every effort that illumines right, extends liberty, and brings men to God. Love of men, evinced in practical service of their wide interests, is the sign and proof of the anointing of God.

Hence the inspired man is always in the van of progress. He does not and cannot lag behind. His possession of the Spirit makes "the coming life cry always, 'On and On!'" Even though it be against his immediate interests, and in the face of his cherished methods and associations, yet he triumphs over himself and carries forward movements in which "the old order changeth, yielding place to new." Had Samuel died young, it has been suggested, his place in the annals of Israel would have been far lower, and his value as a pattern of the ways of the Spirit of God would have been much less. But he lived to bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, the source of a perennial youth, and the Inspiration to a constant social and national advancement. Naturally he was loath to separate himself from the order of the "Judges," of which he was the last and most illustrious example, and it was not till after prolonged suffering, and the suppression of intense personal antipathy to the kingly form of government,

that he could inaugurate and guide the nation into a new era. But he did it, and did it with consummate skill, electing the right men for the task, watching over Saul with a father's affection, and grieving over his failure with a father's sorrow; then providing for the far-off future by the choice and consecration of the son of Jesse, the most famous king of the Hebrew race. There is no finer sight in the long and chequered annals of inspired men than the youthful ability for national progress shown by Samuel in the closing years of his long life. "Hast thou not heard that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" The Spirit of God is the Spirit of eternal progress. With an infinite patience, and an unquivering steadfastness, "the pupils of the Spirit," unfettered by past victories, uncramped by long-used machinery bearing their own name as inventors and patentees,—

" Choose to walk high with sublimer dread,
Rather than crawl in safety : "

elect to herald new eras, initiate vast reforms, build up the new by the side of the old, and so

" Fashion acts that are to be,
When they shall lie in darkness silently."

No inspired man can be a frozen pedant, a blind dry-as-dust, a galvanized corpse, frantically clutching at yesterday as though it were better than to-day, and talking of God as though He had revealed Himself as the "I was," instead of the "I AM." The breath of the Almighty lifts him out of the darkness of a selfish stagnation, and makes him the harbinger of the coming Day.

And, as though to deliver us from the idea that Inspiration is the same as infallibility, evidence is not lacking, that in and through all, the prophet remains a man, liable to human infirmities, as he is exposed to human sorrows. His Inspiration does not shut the door against misfortune, nor preclude the possibility of wrong. Samuel's sons "turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and perverted judgment;" and Samuel himself misconceived the Divine motive, and misinterpreted the Divine action, in the matter of the destruction of the Amalekites, "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."* God's Spirit does not treat men as the unconscious organs of the Divine, mere passive instruments of a

* 1 Samuel xv., 3.—Even supposing provocation had been given by the great Bedouin tribe (xiv., 48) of Amalekites, and that the hereditary enemies of Israel fully deserved the inexorable severity with which they were visited, yet this putting to death of "the infant and sucking, of ox and sheep," is not defensible in the clearer light and loftier ethic of the New Testament. The act is, in the words of Canon Mozley, "the result of the undisciplined passion of justice working without the perception of the limit which man's individuality imposed upon it." No one can justify either it, or Jael's deed of blood (Judges iv., 17-22), or endorse the patriotic but mistaken approbation given by Deborah to such base treachery and cruelty. Jael acts a lie. It does not cease to be a lie because it is in the Bible, nor does the Bible commend it by inserting it, any more than a newspaper is supposed to approve every act recorded in its columns. Nor does the claim to a Divine command alter the fact that Samuel's address to Saul, at once in the *motive* it suggests, and in the relentless severity it enjoins, partakes of the infirmity of the time, is a sign of the defective and partial morality of the age, and is one of the strongest witnesses to the need for the clearer Revelation and perfect morality of Jesus Christ. How vast is the interval between that call to war and the rebuke administered by Christ to James and John when they wished to use Heaven's lightning for destroying the reluctant Samaritans!

higher and stronger current of power ; but whilst illuminating and quickening their various faculties, and augmenting their strength, leaves them free ; and being free, liable to the dimness of vision belonging to their time, and to the misconceptions consequent upon a partial and fragmentary Revelation.

Therefore, not even our depressing sense of mistake, our mist-bound ideas, our feeling that God has cramped dwelling in our souls, should hinder us from believing in, working for, and hastening to a present-day Inspiration. Each element of this four-fold result bears witness to a universal need and to a possible universal experience ; prophesies that "when He is come, He will convince the *world* of sin and righteousness, and judgment ;" be "poured out on all flesh," so that all flesh may see the full salvation of God.

Irresistible as this answer is, it only forces on us a further question, scarcely less perplexing, *viz.*, How may we be sure that the voice that speaks within us is the voice of God, and not of self? that the impressions, ideas, and convictions are the result of Divine Inspiration, and not the subtle temptations of evil, or the disguised promptings of a foolish and fevered fancy? Ay, there's the rub! That's the insuperable difficulty!

Fortunately for us this is not a new problem. It is as old as the other. The Jews of Berea had to face it with less light than we have, for they were invited to pass into a new realm of thought and action, and required an unerring guide. Paul and Silas preached the Word concerning Christ to them, and they received

it with all openness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily whether these things were so; many of them, therefore, believed. They went at once to the *best* test they had; used the supreme verifying process then in existence, looked into the Hebrew accounts of the manifestation of God in the past; compared them with that which was reported to them by the missionaries, and entered into rest and power.

Now we have this advantage over the Bereans, that the Scriptures are larger for us than they were for them, and that the message which they tested has endured every possible trial, outlived every vicissitude of human fortune, and having never failed to prove its Divine reality and growing power, has become our *touchstone* of truth. They went to the Old Testament to see whether the things said about Christ and His salvation were according to the law and the prophets. We can take all the movements of the Spirit of God in our hearts to-day to Christ, to see whether they are in accordance with His Spirit and teaching, with His redeeming purpose and kingdom, with His sacrifice and ethics, with His character and Ideal. He is our infallible test. For of Him, and of Him only, is it said that He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Even the greatest of the sons of men failed, and failed signally. Each one joins in the universal confession, "I have sinned." Abraham is not without fault. Moses fails in self-government. Job sins with his lips. Buddha laments his errors. Mahomet asks God for forgiveness. Christ does not. No prayer for pardon passes over His lips, though He bids

others seek it. He is without spot. The miracle of human holiness ; the proof of the highest Inspiration is perfected in Him.

Nor is this all ; but on the positive side of His nature He is equally unmatched. The Spirit is given to Him "*without measure.*" There is no restriction whatever ; none from above, none from below, none from *within*. He has the Spirit in His totality descending and *abiding* upon Him. He is, therefore, the complete and absolute Revelation of God. Others were but fragments, "*broken lights.*" In Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily. God was in Christ. He is the pattern and type of the fully-inspired life—and in this infallible Person we have the all-sufficing test, the one supreme means of verifying the movements of the Spirit of God within us.

Yet another question. If this gift of the Spirit be open to all souls, and this test be so easy of application, why is it that Samuel, of all the lads in Israel, hears the Divine Voice, and no one else ? that Isaiah and Paul are inspired, and so many of their contemporaries are not ? Why? Well, why did mathematics and colours speak with such captivating sweetness to the mind of Clerk Maxwell? Why did music penetrate and sway the soul of young Mozart? Why could not Flaxman rest in his father's shop without modelling and sketching? Why did Augustine hear the summons falling on his ear as he walked in the orchards at Tagaste: "Take and read, Take and read?" Look into their minds, and you will find the same law at work. Scientific things are scientifically

discerned; musical things are musically discerned; artistic things are artistically discerned; and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Their natures and training offered the appropriate organs and conditions, and the Inspiration followed. To the fitting organ for hearing there comes the guiding Voice of God.

Few "cases" more vividly illustrate this law than Samuel's. At least six signs of fitness show themselves: his godly descent; his devout dedication for life to the service of God; his early spiritual training; his pre-eminent prayerfulness; his glowing love of God; and his unfaltering obedience to the Divine will.

Samuel was born of an inspired mother. Hannah was a woman of genius, true to God, fervidly devout, serenely trustful, and blossoms at least once into spiritual song, with summer luxuriance and beauty. More propitious pre-natal conditions no prophet could have had.

Very early the boy was expressly dedicated to the special service of Jehovah. Living in an age of Vows, he was placed under all the solemn sanctities of the Nazarite life, and given from childhood to a vocation which filled his eager mind with the thought of God and of His worship. The quickening influence of that spiritual atmosphere followed swiftly, and acted nourishingly upon the germs of power with which he started life.

Inspired personalities inspire. Communion with the prophetess Hannah, and with Judge Eli, would instruct, guide, warn, and enrich the life of this youth to an unprecedented degree. In one was all the moulding force of a mother's spiritual affection; in the

other the highest wisdom of the age stood ready to direct and aid. Eli was Samuel's Bible. He was in the line of Divine Revelation. In him was stored the law of Abraham and Jacob, of Moses and Joshua, and it was his delight to set young Samuel in the right attitude for receiving the Word of God. Ah! friends, we do not begin soon enough in our spiritual training to grow prophets for God. We are sceptical about the laws of the Spirit. Our efforts are delayed till evil gets entrenched in the heart, and bad habits are formed. We need to start sooner. We ought to be first. We want a larger confidence in the spiritual susceptibilities of the young. Do we ever read of a prophet called of God in *old* age? Does not proficiency in any department of life depend upon an early consecration? Did not Nelson decide upon his profession at twelve years of age, and the Duke of Marlborough at fifteen? Was not Sir Robert Peel, Premier of England, educated by his father for the House of Commons? Robert Hall, too, was the pastor of a church at nineteen, and Charles H. Spurgeon startled this metropolis before he was twenty-one. Robertson of Brighton, Charles Kingsley, and F. D. Maurice received their vocation in early manhood. John Wesley was only twenty-five when he planted the first seeds of Methodism; Calvin wrote his Institutes before he was twenty-four; and Luther was preaching the doctrines of faith when he was under thirty. "St. Francis of Assisi renounced the world at the age of twenty-four. St. Francis Xavier entered the Order, in which he was to play so great a part, at the age of twenty-eight, and was preaching at

Goa before he was thirty-six. St. Francis de Sales renounced the world at the age of twenty-six, and was in full career as a religious preacher before he was thirty." John, the youngest, if not the earliest, of the disciples of Christ, saw further into the recesses of the mysterious nature of the Son of God than any of his fellow apostles. Paul, though last in arriving within the apostolic circle, had been a strenuous seeker after God as a "young man;" and Jesus, the Son of Mary, was fully set on doing the business of His Father in Heaven at the age of twelve. I am sure that if we would understand and obey these laws of the pre-natal basis of prophetic endowment, dedicate our children from birth to the highest vocation, and secure them the continued fellowship and guidance of inspired personalities, our sons and daughters would respond to the Divine call and gladly obey the Divine mandate.

But the source of all things is God, and it is in communion with Him our nature is opened to the fullest access of His Spirit. Sir Joshua Reynolds reveals the secret of the inspired life in his pleading pathetic picture of young Samuel at prayer. All Israel knew the long, piercing cry of the prophet to the Lord. In their perils his intercessions had been their deliverance, and in their battles his prayers had secured them victory. The sweetest Gospel he could give them was the assurance of his continued supplication. He was a man of prayer. George Macdonald gives beautiful expression to the connection between communion and Inspiration in one of the prayers of that God-filled spirit, *David Eglinbrod*, when he cries,

“Be Thou by us even as a mother sits by the bedside of her ailing child all the long night; only be Thou nearer to us, even in our very souls, and watch over the world of dreams that they make for themselves. Grant that more and more thoughts of Thy thinking may come into our hearts day by day, till there shall be at last an open road between Thee and us, and Thy angels may ascend and descend upon us, so that we may be in Thy heaven, even while we are upon Thy earth, Amen.”

“*An open road between Thee and us.*” That is it. There is the inspired life. Think you God our Father will ever desert that “open road?” Never! His delight is with the heart that is contrite and the spirit that listens to His Word.

Now, the one thing that makes an “open road” between the soul and God is *love*, love from the Father above and love from us to Him; and that which keeps it open is *obedience*. Samuel the prophet is a flaming fire of zeal for God. His soul burns with awe-filled love of the Eternal, and he can solace his spirit in his age by an uncontradicted assertion made before Israel of his integrity, fidelity, and righteousness. It is an anticipation of the law of Jesus. “He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. If a man love Me he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

Love surrendering itself wholly to God in sacrificial obedience opens the whole being to Him, and invites the surging fulness of His energy to enter and rule.

The River of Life that comes from the heart of the invisible Father flows close by the path of loving obedience.

If, then, any of us lack the strength of a daily Inspiration—and who does not?—let him ask of God, with a fully dedicated spirit, an intense yearning to glorify God, a total suppression of selfish desire, and a sustained doing of all the will of God, and He will do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, even the power of the risen Christ, who hath already given us of His spirit.

Dear friends, God is not far from any one of you. Open your hearts to His love. Listen for the tones of His voice above the din of the world, and in the stillness of your inward life. He has guiding words for your feet, light for your eyes, and strength for your will. Note the sayings of the Hannahs and Elis He sends to you, and let them take you to Him, so that you may hear God Himself speaking to *you*. Never doubt Him. Be sure, always sure, of His loving help, and of His gracious protection. Say, like Samuel, “*Speak, for Thy servant heareth!*”

And shall not we all make the prayer of Moses our own this day: “Would that all the Lord’s people were”—readers? *No!* teachers? *No!*—but “prophets,” prophets of the living and redeeming God!

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